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ABSTRACT

The opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach to training research and policy were examined through the commissioning and analysis of reports on trends and issues in five European countries: Belgium; France; Germany; Greece; and the Netherlands. Special attention was paid to the opportunities of sectoral initiatives for small and medium-size companies and the interconnectedness of training initiatives and the social dialogue between employer and employee associations. "Sector" was defined broadly as an economic and sociopolitical category. The prospects for a sectoral approach in training research were said to be favorable because the relevance of a sectoral approach will likely increase in the coming years as a result of a general trend to decentralize training. Practical opportunities for applying a sectoral approach to training research were found to differ strongly from country to country and from sector to sector within countries. After an examination of the possible roles of individual firms, company networks, professional associations, and regional-sectoral partnerships in formation and implementation of sectoral policies training, it was concluded that sectoral training policies should be connected and completed with training initiatives at the subsectoral and cross-sectoral levels. A conceptual model for analyzing sectoral training systems was proposed. (Contains 41 references.) (MN)

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CEDEFOP Document

# Sectoral approach to training Synthesis report on trends and issues in five European countries

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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Sectoral approach to training
Synthesis report on trends and issues in five European countries

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# Foreword

In the past years we have been witnessing the revival of the sectoral dimension in training at European level.

Pushed into the background during the seventies and eighties due to automation and the spread of new technology (N.T.) in production and services, which has blurred the demarcation lines between sectors and professions, the sector taken as a system undergoing continuing training and retraining comes again to the forefront of discussion and analysis of training and employment programmes.

Many reasons account for this. The need for better targeting of both national and European necessary interventions for training, retraining, industrial restructuring and re-employment, the ever-growing demand for subsidies and scarce financial resources.

This leads to an overall concern to evaluate and rationalise interventions, which can be best monitored and assessed at sectoral level.

In the era of economic globalisation, effective policies have to take into account the characteristics of specific sectors with their varying content, varying intensity and frequency.

Much attention is being paid to the decentralisation and delegation of decision-making to levels other than the national and central ones. Sectors operate in specific environments and are influenced by them in legal, financial, and infrastructural terms - human resources.

Training also becomes an important issue for cooperation between the social partners at national and European levels, or the sectors constitute an important point of entry into the Social Dialogue as employers and employees are organised according to sectors and many training activities decided jointly are sectoral.

Sectoral training systems are not well studied and are seldom documented in comparison with what has been written about initial or continuing vocational training.

In CEDEFOP we chose to tackle this issue through a small pilot project on the advantages and limitations of the sectoral approach in training research and in training policy implementation. Examples of sectors have been drawn from France, Greece, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. They refer mainly to continuing (non-initial) vocational training and to agriculture, industry and services.

The present study is both the synthesis of the five national reports and their further elaboration to shed light on the twofold question concerning the importance of the sectoral approach for research and policy in training matters. Researchers have been asked to pay special attention to SNES because we know sectors encounter problems in addressing them.

The study concludes with a conceptual model for the analysis of sectoral training systems. Being a model, this methodological proposal serves as a framework for reference for analysing and presenting the interrelationships between sectoral agencies, training sectoral agreements, sectoral policies and provisions and training practices within the firms.

Many researchers have contributed to the present study and CEDEFOP would like to thank the authors of the national reports: Ms Marie-Christine Combes of the University of Mendon, France; Mr Jan Denys, HIVA of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium; Mr Valter Fissamber, Mr P. Linardos-Rylmond and Ms A. Koniotaki, VFA Association, Athens, Greece; and Ms Angela Paul-Kohlhof, SFS, Dortmund, Germany.

Special thanks go to the authors of the Dutch national report and of the present study, Mr John Warmerdam and Mr Harry van den Tillaart, ITS-Nijmegen, The Netherlands, for their commitment and efforts to compile so much information, contradictory arguments and highly dissimilar situations into a comprehensive work.

Having a deep insight into sectoral issues themselves, they have also been able to take into account research results produced by third parties.

Tina Bertzeletou
Project co-ordinator

# 0. Introduction

In recent years, in the European Union the sectoral dimension in training has become of growing importance. In several European countries economic sectors or branches have developed as separate levels for the organisation of continuing training activities, with their own training agreements, training institutes, training facilities and training policies. In several countries, the sectoral level has also strategic importance in national government policies aimed at a stimulation and subvention of continuous training. As the experiences and results of the sectoral surveys carried out within the framework of the FORCE programme demonstrate, sectoral approaches to training have become more elaborated at the European level as well..

In comparison with initial vocational education, very limited research has been done on the structure and functioning of sectoral systems for continuing vocational training until now. How do these systems come into being? How do they develop? How are they organized within their national and sectoral environments? Which differences exist between sectors and how can these differences be explained? What are the results and effects of sectoral initiatives at the level of companies and employees? How successful are sectoral agencies in stimulating and implementing training activities at firm level? What are the conditions of success and failure? On the whole, these are still unanswered questions.

In order to shed more light on these questions, CEDEFOP initiated an explorative study in five European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands. National experts in these countries were asked to write a short report on the significance of a sectoral approach to training in their countries and to describe some concrete examples of actual practices in different sectors. The national reports were discussed in several workshops organised by CEDEFOP.

This report contains a synthesis of the information and arguments presented in the five national reports. First, we briefly review the goals, scope and design of the study (chapter 1). Then, we define and demarcate the sectoral concept (chapter 2). In chapter 3 we give an overview of the actual state of affairs concerning the sectoral approach in the five participating countries. Chapter 4 discusses the application of a sectoral approach to training research, while chapter 5 contains an assessment of the opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach to training

policy development. In chapter 6 the question of implementation of sectoral training policies is tackled. In this respect, chapter 7 elaborates the role of additional institutions at the sub-sectoral and cross-sectoral level. By way of summary and synthesis, the report concludes in chapter 8 with the elaboration of a conceptual frame of reference, which can be used for the analysis of sectoral training systems in future research.

# 1. Goals, scope and design of the study

*Why look at the sectoral dimension?*

In this study two questions are central, namely:

1. What are the opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach in research into the training of employees?

2. What are the opportunities and the limitations of a sectoral approach in a policy aimed at stimulating the training of employees?

A first observation which has to be made here is that both questions are closely intertwined. A policy aimed at stimulating the training of employees is hardly possible without the accompaniment of research. After all, policy makers need information to gain and to keep insight into the developments occurring in the economic structure. In addition, research is necessary to acquire good insight into the scope and the nature of the training needs. Finally, research is necessary to find out how the behaviour of employers and employees can be influenced into the desired direction of training. After all, policy is only effective if it intervenes in the mechanisms that regulate the decisions and the behaviour of employers and/or employees.

However, this observations does not answer the question of the extent to which a *sectoral approach* is the most obvious one in research and policy in the field of training. It appears that there are several arguments in favour of a sectoral approach.

The *first* argument is based on the fact that, although it is true that changes occur in all sectors, each sector or branch has varying situations or patterns underlying this general picture, in a quantitative sense as well as in a qualitative sense. The actual circumstances in which companies operate differ for each branch. This implies that for each branch the requirements the employers and their personnel have to comply with differ as well, which of course has consequences for the scope and the nature of their training needs. Also with respect to participation in training and training facilities, research indicates that sectors vary greatly. If a policy is to be effective, it has to allow for these varying situations and their backgrounds.

The *second* argument is that quite a lot of information on economic issues is already available at sectoral level because a number of important collectors of (statistical) information use (standard) classifications of companies, which are structured on a sectoral basis. This is why data are available on many training-related issues, for instance on: the number of companies, employees, job vacancies, relevant developments that occur, opinions/analyses with regard to the impact of these developments on the required qualifications the employees in a particular sector have to meet, etc. In several countries, e.g. Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, national surveys have also been conducted to measure participation in in-company training. The data are used to draw up basic statistics, in which figures on size, nature, participation in and costs of in-company training are broken down into the level of sectors. So, although the situation differs from country to country - depending on the level of 'statistical coverage' - generally there is already a lot of information available at the sectoral level.

The *third* argument is that important policy actors, in particular the social partners and partly the educational field as well, are organised and active according to sectors. In countries like Belgium, France and the Netherlands the social partners are highly important because in collective bargaining they increasingly reach agreements on the training of employees and on research into training needs. Besides, the involvement of the social partners in the content of vocational education has also increased considerably during the past 10 years. In several countries, e.g. Germany and The Netherlands, the social partners are actually concerned with the formulation of occupational profiles on the basis of investigations into the various branches of business, which serve as a foundation for occupational training profiles and training curricula in vocational education.

The *fourth* argument in favour of a sectoral approach is based on the part the government plays in this field. Although the exact role of the government with respect to training for employees strongly differs in the countries investigated, in each country the government tries to give supportive impulses. When taking measures, government agencies often define sectoral organisations as their main target groups. Examples are e.g. the subvention programmes 'Transmit' and 'Impuls' in The Netherlands. The objective of the "Transmit" programme is the development of tools for branch organisations so that they can contribute to the conversion of information from branch investigations into training questions. The "Impuls" programme is intended to assist sectors in finding solutions for persistent

problems occurring in the connection between occupational training and the job market. In both cases it concerns temporary measures intended to make structural improvements. In other countries actors at the sectoral level also prove to provide important clues for a policy aimed at the stimulation of training of employees.

Thus, there are both methodological as well as political arguments in favour of a sectoral approach. For CEDEFOP these arguments were reasons to initiate a study on the sectoral dimension in training policy and research.

*Goals of the study*

The *main objective* of this study is to explore the opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach to research and policy in the field of continuous training, by means of an assessment of existing practices, policies and outcomes of research. For CEDEFOP, two aspects of this question are of special interest.

First, special attention has to be given to the opportunities of sectoral initiatives for *small and medium-size companies*. There are many indications that these companies lag behind with regard to training. In the long term this can lead to a suboptimal diffusion and adoption of innovations in these companies and serious inefficiencies in the adaptation to new developments in technology and organisation. Perhaps, a sectoral approach can remove some of the obstacles to training in these firms.

A second point is the *Social Dialogue*. More and more, training is becoming an important theme in the Social Dialogue between employers' and employees' associations and this co-operation between the social partners may have strong effects on the provision and promotion of training. In many countries, however, the Social Dialogue is primarily organised along sectoral lines and it is also at the sectoral level that the prime effects of co-operative efforts come to the fore. This interconnectedness of training initiatives and the social dialogue is a second reason to have a closer look at the sectoral dimension of training.

From the main objective, several *subgoals* have been derived:

- exploration of the sectoral dimension in five EU countries
- description of major trends and issues in sectoral training policies
- evaluation of the perspectives of a sectoral approach to training
- elaboration of a conceptual frame of reference
- identification of themes for further study and research

Besides this, the project aims to contribute to the improvement of a methodology for the description and analysis of sectoral training systems in international research and to the exchange of experiences between countries and sectors.

*Scope of the study*

In order to meet these objectives a study was set up in five European countries. All of these are countries where the sectoral level does play a role in the provision of training to employees. However, there is also a crucial difference:

- three of them are countries where the sectoral level is already well-established in a large number of branches as a level for policy making and organisation of continuing training: Belgium, France and the Netherlands; in these countries, sectoral training agencies have gained a lot of practical experience with the implementation of training on firm level;

- the other two countries - Germany and Greece - are countries where the sectoral level recently has begun to play a role as it comes to provision of training, development of sectoral training plans and programmes, setting up of sectoral training institutes; here a very limited number of sectors already has a more developed sectoral training system.

We may expect that countries/sectors which actually are just beginning to elaborate sectoral training systems will, in the future, meet obstacles and problems that more developed countries/sectors have already had to cope with in the past and that they can learn from these experiences and solutions. This, of course, within their own specific national and sectoral context. For this reason, we have looked for a way to give the study and especially the synthesis report a comparative character.

*Design of the project*

The project was carried out in five steps:

Step 1: Drafting of a national report on the situation in the Netherlands. The project started in the Netherlands, because this is a country where sectoral approaches to training are very pronounced in many sectors and where a lot of research on the subject is already available.

Step 2: The Dutch report was discussed in a workshop with experts from the other participating countries.

Step 3: National reports were written on the situation in Belgium, France, Germany and Greece. The reports were based on an assessment of available research and on consultations with national and sectoral experts in the field of continuous training.

Step 4: A workshop with all partners was held to discuss the national reports and a proposed outline for the synthesis report.

Step 5: The synthesis report was drafted, with the national reports and the discussions on the workshops as the main sources of input.

Before discussing the findings, we want to stress some of the limitations of the study. The synthesis report is an explorative study, based on an assessment of national experts of the situation in their country. These experts in turn had to rely primarily on existing literature, secondary analyses and a small number of consultations of sectoral experts. Doing new research was not possible. So, this report can only give an initial overview of opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach to training. It cannot give a systematic in-depth analysis or a detailed empirical state of affairs; sectoral examples are described only globally. Besides, as mentioned before, the study focuses on only five European countries. The other countries are outside its scope.

## 2. Demarcation of the sector concept

Before we can start the analysis of the opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach to training, we have to clarify another important point: the demarcation of the concept of sector. On the one hand, this is a matter of statistics and classification. On the other hand, it is a matter of politics and identification.

In the available statistical databases - often national macro-statistics - various lines of approach are being used for making classifications within the economic structure. Some classifications mainly aim at showing the distribution of economic activities, apart from their actual contents. A regional classification, for instance, reflects the distribution of the economic activities to the various regions. Another example is the distribution of economic activities to large firms on the one hand and to SMEs on the other. Other classifications take exactly the content of economic activities as a point of departure. On the basis of this, classifications into occupations, as well as classifications into sectors are made. Both kinds of classifications usually overlap or correspond to a considerable extent, but they are definitely not identical. After all, certain occupations occur in more than one sector and sectoral demarcations often cut across broader occupational domains.

When collecting and analysing information about economic activities, a classification into sectors is used more often than a classification into occupations. For this, some countries, like Greece, use the standard European classification (NACE codes), other countries, with a longer 'statistical tradition', like Belgium, Germany and France, have also developed their own national classification schemes. An example of such a sectoral classification is the *Standard Company Classification* used in the Netherlands. This standard company classification of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) is a classification into 9 *branches of business*, 58 *classes of business*, 306 *groups of business*, including a large number of *subgroups of business*. Instead of the notion of subgroup of business, the CBS also uses the term *branch*. The standard company classification is not based on any theoretical concept. Nor are any unequivocal classification criteria used. Companies are classified into the four categories mentioned above on the basis of one or more of the following criteria:

- applied production technology;
- raw materials used;
- the nature of the final product.

Common usage and professional literature as well do not always make a clear distinction into branch of business, classes of business, group and subgroup of business. Also the notions of branch and sector are often used as synonyms and, what is more, are applied indiscriminately to each of the four levels mentioned above. Therefore, we have come to the conclusion that the notions of branch and sector can indicate heterogeneous, as well as - relatively - homogenous groups of companies, depending on the level of differentiation that has been chosen. This is the case in the Netherlands and also in the other countries investigated.

Though it is true that one can talk about a sectoral structure of the economy and that standard company classifications (like the one of the CBS) are a useful instrument for gaining more insight into this structure, one always has to keep in mind that this sector structure in fact, is always in *motion* and that, consequently, there is a continuous process of *sector formation and reformation* going on. Under the influence of new economic and technological developments sectors disappear - or are relocated to other countries - and others take their place. This is how during the 50s and the 60s the mining industry in the Netherlands was gradually replaced by the extraction and exploitation of natural gas. The shipbuilding industry and the textile industry are examples of sectors which have by now been relocated for a considerable part to countries with low wages. The computer service sector is an example of a new, rapidly growing branch of the economy. Additionally, it happens with a certain regularity that the boundaries between sectors fade away so that some sectors are joined together, as for instance, the metal/electrotechnical industry. The same applies to the structure of occupations. Actually, a continuous process of the *formation of occupations* is taking place. This is how many traditional, manual occupations in the process industry have now been replaced by operator-like occupations. Another example is the occupation of mechanical engineer, which, apart from the "traditional" mechanical expertise, increasingly requires expertise in the field of electronics as well. This dynamism certainly does not remain limited to industrial sectors, but is also occurring in totally different sectors, such as the health and care sector. We will discuss this point further in chapter 6 and 7 on the opportunities and limitations of a sectoral approach.

Another comment we would like to make with regard to standard company classifications like that of the CBS is that the interweaving of sectors and the relationships between them will be largely left out of consideration. One of the reasons for this is that the classifications do not use a consistent distinction between

branch of business and business column or business chain. Sometimes the sectors are interwoven so strongly that *cluster* is a more appropriate term for this phenomenon. Such a cluster is formed by a series of companies, which carefully gear their activities to each other - or have to do so -, because they depend on one another to a greater or lesser extent. Perhaps the agribusiness complex is the clearest example of this (cf. Benvenuti, 1982). But also in the other sections of the economic structure there are suppliers and contractors and/or other kinds of co-operation and dependence with respect to matters such as raw materials, sales potentials, technology and knowledge (Jacobs et al, 1994). This last point indicates that these clusters also provide good starting points for stimulating training policy. We will elaborate this point in detail in paragraph 7 on the limitations of a sectoral approach.

Apart from the product and the production process, it is also conceivable to use totally different classification criteria for making a distinction into branches or sectors, for example, a classification according to *collective labour agreements*. The use of this classification criterion creates groups of companies whose employers' organisations and trade unions think that the terms of employment can be arranged collectively. Within the framework of research and policy in the field of continuing training, the collective labour agreements do constitute a relevant classification criterion, as we will illustrate in the next paragraphs. Classifications based on collective agreements and standard company classifications demonstrate some overlap, but mostly they do not have the same structure. By no means all of the collective agreements coincide with the boundaries drawn in the standard company classification. Some agreements are at the level of classes of business, others at the level of groups of business, or even at the level of subgroups. In addition, there are many classes and groups of business with more than one collective agreement. Besides this, collective labour agreements on the level of classes or groups of businesses can be combined with collective agreements on company level, e.g. in Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands. This complicates classifications even further.

Thus, we can say the concept of 'sector' can have two different meanings and can be used in a double sense:

1. Firstly, it can be used as an *economic or statistical category*, i.e. as a designation of a specific "collection" of economic activities; it designates a

grouping of companies on the basis of their main economic activity, product or technology. In this sense the concept is mostly used in literature on training research and classification.

2. Secondly, it can be used as a *social or socio-political category*, as a designation of a specific institutional domain, on which collective actors play their games of interest. In this sense it is often used in literature on training policy. Training activities in economic sectors are then considered to be one of the links within the chain of institutions which connects the education and the employment system; they are located on an intermediate position between the provisions for initial vocational education, still part of the educational system, and the provisions for specific in-company training, which are situated within the employment system.

We may conclude that the demarcation of an economic sector takes place within a continuously evolving socio-political field of forces. Questions like what activities constitute at a certain moment an economic 'sector'? how this (new) domain of activities has to be labelled and classified? what is the scope of the domain, which companies belong to it and which do not? which other agencies may exert influence on it and which may not? are all settled within the network of institutions which at a certain moment constitutes itself as a sector. And often, questions are not settled and conflicts arise. Claims of new types of companies or new occupational groupings may clash with established sectoral institutions. At the periphery of sectors border conflicts may arise with other sectors with regard to the allocation of certain activities. Sometimes, the issues may seem to be superficial, but they are highly relevant for the relationships between the actors involved (social partners, training institutes, governmental agencies).

The French report makes an explicit statement on this point. In France, a distinction is made between two concepts: 'secteur d'activité' and 'branch professionelle' (pages 1-3). The first concept is in essence a statistical and economic category: 'l'agrégat des entreprises qui le constitue est basé sur l'activité dominante de celles-ci'. It has little social significance. The second concept, 'branch professionelle', refers to 'un regroupement d'entreprises effectué sur la base du produit ou de la technologie'. This aggregate is seen as a social construction. It signifies a level of structuration of occupational relations in between the national level and the level of the companies and as such it is: 'l'espace de négociation

entre partenaires sociaux visant à la conclusion de conventions collectives'. Collective agreements, e.g. those on training, contribute to this construction of branches as a branch. And also the statistical identification is an element of the structuration of branches: 'L'identification statistique est, en soi, un élément de structuration de la branche. Si la branche ne peut s'identifier dans le système statistique national, construit sur la notion de secteur, il lui manque une partie des éléments constitutifs de son identité' (p. 2). When analysing sectoral training systems, we have to take this socio-political dimension into account.

# 3. Sectoral approaches to training in five countries

In this chapter we give an overview of sectoral approaches to training in the five European countries, which participated in the project: The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Greece. These overviews are based on the national reports delivered by experts from these countries (see: list of references).

## 3.1 The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a country with highly developed systems for continuous training on the sectoral level. Two particular circumstances contribute to this state of affairs. The first is the rather distant role the national government adopts in the field of training for employees. Point of departure of Dutch educational policies is that the business community, not the government has the prime responsibility in the field of continuous training. The government is solely responsible for initial training. With regard to further training, it's main role is to stimulate sectors, branches and companies to take initiatives themselves. The organisations representing employers and employees are seen as the dominant implementers of this policy. Important instruments they can dispose of are the Collective Employment Agreements (CAOs).

In many sectors, then, the social partners have actively used the space left by the government and the autonomy given to them. This has to do with a second characteristic of Dutch industrial relations: it's highly corporatist tradition. Many sectors, especially the larger ones in industry, service and public administration, have well-established representative agencies, both on the employers as on the employees' side, with a long tradition of sectoral negotiation and consensus building in the field of employment benefits. This has strongly promoted the establishment of sectoral training agreements, policies and provisions.

Research by the Dutch Office for Collective Employment Agreements (DCA, 1990 and 1995) demonstrates that for some years the number of collective employment agreements which explicitly mention agreements on training is clearly increasing. Furthermore, since the mid-eighties, these training agreements are gradually getting a different character. In-depth analysis of these agreements (De Vries & Hövels, 1991) signals a shift from rather limited agreements on financial reimbursements for

training towards more strategic agreements on the overall stimulation of training of employees and on the integration of training in sectoral training, employment and labour market policies. A very important step in this process was the establishment of so-called *'training and development funds'* in many sectors. These funds, jointly administrated by the employers' and employees' associations of a specific branch or trade, control the finances which the collective employment agreement determines for training, for instance by way of a surcharge on salaries. With these financial resources CAO agreements on training rights can be remunerated or facilitated. According to the DCA, in 1989, training and development funds had been established in one third of all Dutch CAO's (DCA, 1990). In 1995 agreements on training in CAO's covered approximately 3 million employees, i.e. more than half of the Dutch working population. With the aid of the training funds many sectors have developed specific programmes and provisions for employees working in the companies contributing to the funds. Sometimes these provisions were wholly new, sometimes they could build upon provisions already existing within the established training institutes for the sector. Training provisions are also variously embedded within other sectoral policy fields, like employment policy, labour market or innovation policy. To give an impression of what has been reached, we describe the initiatives in the metallurgical industry and one of its subsectors: the car repair sector. More examples will be given in chapter 5.

In a study of the implications of collective employment agreements on training in different sectors, De Vries & Hövels (1990) give an overview of the agreements made by the social partners in the *metallurgical industry*. This large and heterogeneous sector has collective employment agreements on two levels: a skeleton agreement for the sector as a whole and more detailed agreements between the social partners of the different sub-sectors or branches. At the beginning of the eighties the social partners at the central level agreed to develop a new training policy for the sector and to stimulate branches to establish collective training funds. The partners agreed upon an annual employers' contribution to the fund equal to 0.55% of total salaries. They also reached agreement on a new regulation for day release for training. Under this new agreement, every employer is awarded a number of days for training every year, which is equivalent to the number of staff employed by him in that year. This means that every employee has a right of one day release for training every year. In the following years, various branches in the metal industry incorporated these new regulations in their own collective employment agreements.

We investigated one of the branches of the metal industry more closely, i.e. the *motor vehicle repair and distribution sector* (Warmerdam, 1993). The social partners in this branch took over the skeleton agreements of the metal industry and established a training and development fund for their own branch in 1990. This fund is called the OOMT. The main tasks of this foundation are the financing and stimulation of training activities and the (further) development of training policy in the sector. Gradually, the OOMT, which is jointly administrated by the employers' organisations and the trade unions, has grown to become the most important policy institute in the field of training. The OOMT placed the implementation of training policy in the hands of the INNOVAM, the traditional educational centre of the motor vehicle repair branch. As a response to the rapid technological innovations in the car industry, the INNOVAM has put a lot of energy into the modernization and extension of its training course supply, especially its supply in the field of modern electronics. Recently, at the request of the OOMT, the INNOVAM introduced a new system for planning training in the sector. Research has been done to assess the training needs of companies and, based on this research, a sectoral training plan has been drawn up. The plan is for three years ahead and can be updated every year. The plan sets out which participation in existing courses can be expected and what new types of courses have to be developed. In order to finance the training of their staff, car repair companies can use the regulations for day release for training, which have been established in the branch CAO. Which types of courses are subsidised under these regulations is determined by the board of the training fund. INNOVAM courses are reimbursed anyway, but in principle courses of other training institutes or training activities of the companies themselves can also be compensated for. In this sense, INNOVAM is not a monopolist on the training market. However, in practice INNOVAM accounts for nearly all training activities of the general car repair shops, i.e. the shops not incorporated in a dealer organisation of a make of car. The training for dealer companies is provided by the car producers and car importers themselves. This type of training, which often has a specific character, is not subsidised by the sectoral training fund.

This example proves that the social partners are heavily involved in training matters. However, their involvement results in a *diversity of training policies and training structures*. Differences exist with regard to (individual) training rights and study leave regulations, both in a quantitative and a qualitative sense. The metallurgical sector grants every employee one day a year. Other sectors, such as the bakery

and the butchery sectors, give employees up to ten days study leave. There are also differences in the amount of the training charge and in the range of training activities which are financed out of this charge. Sometimes all types of training are eligible for a compensation from the training fund, whereas in other sectors only courses and other training activities supplied by the sector's own vocational training centre are reimbursed. Major differences also exist with regard to the level of planning which is introduced by the sectoral agencies. Some agencies (like those in the car repair sector) apply highly sophisticated methods of forecasting and programming of training, including detailed studies of new developments, jobs, qualification requirements, etc. Other sectors (e.g. the catering services sector) operate in a less systematic way. Furthermore, in some sectors (e.g. the printing industry and the care sector) training policy is closely connected to vocational training and labour market policies, whereas in other sectors such connections do not exist. As yet, little research has been done into the factors which can explain the existing differences. The same holds for their effects. Such research is of course highly relevant to improving existing training provisions.

The growing involvement of the social partners in training also finds expression in an increasing *use of subsidy instruments of the government*, in particular instruments aimed at extending or improving training infrastructure, training supply and training plans of branches and trades. Research has clearly shown that training activities have increased in recent years, even though the economy went through a period of recession (CBS, 1994). At the same time it has been demonstrated that not all types of employees have equal opportunities to participate in training. Some do get their share; others, in particular the elderly, the lower qualified, migrants, temporary workers and disabled persons do not. The social partners can try to reduce these inequalities through specific target group policies and through specific projects for these target groups. There are strong indications that the number of CAO's which have regulations on these issues is increasing.

Yet, the establishment of regulations and provisions is one thing, the implementation of activities is another. The Dutch report indicates that many sectors have serious *problems with the transmission* of initiatives from the sectoral level to the level of firms. It appears to be especially difficult to reach small and medium-sized companies with policies and programmes developed by the sectoral agencies. This leads to training provisions staying unused, low degrees of participation in training in subsegments of the sector and an unequal distribution of training

resources among different categories of employers and employees. In the long term it may threaten the continuation of a sector's training provisions. Although the actors in the field have recognised the problem and have developed several measures to tackle it, the phenomenon appears to be persistent. Sectors nevertheless are in need of solutions, because, in the years to come, training is expected to become one of the major issues in collective bargaining. Recently, the Dutch trade unions declared the improvement of training rights and training leave facilities as their main action points for collective bargaining in the late nineties (FNV, 1996). Training funds which operate effectively are of course a necessary prerequisite to realise these claims.

### 3.2 Belgium

Belgium is also a country with a well-articulated sectoral dimension in continuing training. Here, there are also many sectors which have developed their own training funds, institutes, policies and programmes. However, the difference with The Netherlands is that in Belgium the sectoral initiatives are embedded within a framework of *national regulation*. 'The major breakthrough in sectoral training initiatives', states the Belgian report, 'was undoubtedly the 0,18% measure'. This measure, taken by the (national) social partners in their interprofessional agreement of November 1988, obliged all employers covered by the National Security Office to put 0,18% of their gross wages into a national employment fund in order to contribute to the financing of special initiatives for training and reintegration of young people and jobseekers into the labour market. Sectors or companies could be exempted from this contribution if they made a comparable effort themselves, e.g. within the frame of their own sectoral collective labour contract. According to the Belgian report this was the starting point for many training initiatives in sectors: "Sectoral training initiatives have not therefore arisen from a kind of internal sectoral dynamics, in most cases, but are rather the consequence of a provision included, under governmental pressure, in the interprofessional agreement of 18 November 1988" (p.18). In the beginning, the target groups of the initiatives were demarcated on an interprofessional basis and limited to special categories, like long-term unemployed, disabled or low-qualified employees. Sectors were stimulated to allocate resources especially to those groups. But in later years, as the combination of an intersectoral definition of objectives, in the case of target groups with a sectoral implementation in practice appeared not to work effectively, this

demarcation was abandoned and the actual definition of "risk groups" was left to the sectors themselves. In most sectors this led to such broad allocation of resources that in fact all employees became included.

Research reveals that in 1994 all major sectors, excluding the banking sector, had sectoral training funds covering more then 80% of the working population (Denijs, 1994). The Belgian report describes different aspects of the sectoral training initiatives and distinguishes different *financial arrangements*. As in the Netherlands, the formation of training funds is by far the most important method of financing. Levies are usually imposed upon labour, i.e. on the basis of average earnings. Their rate is determined by the (national) interprofessional agreement, they may be compulsory or voluntary and may be paid solely by the employers or also by the employees. Besides these funds, various sectors have concluded co-operation agreements with the Public Employment Service in order to co-finance training. Some sectors also use the system of paid educational leave - a national governmental measure to stimulate participation of workers in training - as a source of shared financing, e.g. to pay the salaries of employees which are absent for training. A third source of finance is contributions from the participants in training themselves, companies and/ or individual employees. Of course, different financial arrangements reflect different combinations of interests and objectives. Thus, the financial policies adopted by the sector raise specific problems concerning the implementation of sectoral training activities. We will come back to this in chapter 5.

Looking at the *policies* the sectoral training initiatives have developed, the Belgian report identifies five major roles (p.27-31):

- the first is a *mediating* role in the sense of matching demand and supply for training in the sector; the agencies collect information on training demand and connect it with an adequate supply on the private or public market; if no supply is available, the agencies can use their resources to develop an adequate supply or to have it developed;

- secondly, the initiatives can play a *supporting* role; they may finance the development of special training products, not provided by the market, which can support already existing programmes, e.g. self-tuition packages;

- thirdly, almost all agencies assume a *subsidising* role; subsidies may include a wide range of alternatives: in-company training for employees, external training courses, development of training products by training institutes, training of job-seekers, train-the-trainer courses, research on training needs, etc.; the conditions for granting subsidies can lie in various areas and can also differ sharply, e.g. with respect to the content of the training, the target groups, the objectives of the training, level of cofinancing, etc.; "subsidy conditions" states the report, "offer an ideal opportunity for the sectoral training initiatives to give a specific shape to a sectoral training policy" (p.28).

- a fourth option is a *supplying and performing* role; various agencies not only fulfil an intermediate role between supply and demand, but they go further and develop a training supply themselves; often, this supply is complementary to what already is available for the sector;

- fifth, they can have a *certifying* role; in this case the sectoral training initiatives have a direct influence on the quality standards for training in the branch; certification of training courses by the branch itself can make the training market more transparent.

Of course, there is some overlap between roles and, in practice, most sectors combine several roles. According to the Belgian report, the topic of certification will play an important role in the future training debate. Sectoral initiatives which succeed in having a major influence on the certification of training, will become central actors in a sectors' training system and will be able to take a strong position vis-à-vis governmental agencies and educational institutes on the one hand and the agencies operating on the private market on the other. From this position they will be able to exert a strong influence on the sectors' training policy.

In the Belgian report the sectoral initiatives are presented as *corrective institutions for market failures* regarding employee training. Various forms of market failure are distinguished, i.e. situations where market forces do not automatically lead to an optimal and effective allocation of training. Problems can be located on the level of the companies, e.g. inadequate articulation of training needs, lack of knowledge of training supply, inadequate supply of training, lack of a training-oriented climate or uncertainty regarding returns on training investments. They can also be situated on the level of the employees, e.g. in the form of unequal

access to training, too high costs for training, inadequate knowledge of available supply or lack of stimulating incentives. These failures of the market may be corrected by collective market agencies, such as the sectoral training initiatives, or by the government. The Belgian report, although signalling a serious lack of empirical data on this point, tries to give an assessment of the contribution of the sectoral initiatives to market failure correction. It concludes: "Few dispute that sectoral training policy has a corrective effect on the market. However, there are very strong indications that this effect is felt chiefly on the level of suitability. Training intensity increases. Several barriers between demand and supply on the training market are evidently being successfully eliminated. The balance in terms of justice is less positive. However, this increase in training does not seem to lead automatically to a more equal distribution of training. The problem is not so much that poorly qualified people are not reached, but that relatively few of them are reached" (p. 47). As in the Netherlands, the formation of sectoral training policies in Belgium is rather advanced, its implementation appears to be problematic.

### 3.3 France

France is a third European country with well-developed training systems at the sectoral level. As in Belgium and the Netherlands, the social partners have played an active role in the formation of these systems. The situation in France, however, differs in two respects from that in the two former countries. First, in France, sectoral institutions are more strongly embedded in national legislation and government policies and activities in the field of initial and continuing vocational education. Secondly, in France, besides the sectoral level, the regional level has also become an important level for the articulation and organization of continuing training policies.

In the French report, the sectors are presented as *executioners of public policies* regarding vocational education and training. As intermediates between national government on the one hand and the private companies on the other, the sectors play a key role, because they are, as the report states, at once "un lieu de négociation de la formation professionnelle, un lieu d'organisation et de mise en oeuvre de la formation professionnelle, un lieu de définition des besoins de formation" (p. 8). Several legal instruments have been introduced to equip the business community for this role.

The basis was laid in 1971 by a law which established a national *training fund* and obliged all companies to spend a certain percentage of gross wages on training, either by contributing to this fund or by organizing training activities themselves. The law stimulated the development of training funds in many branches of the economy. Responsibility for the development and implementation of training policy was given to the national committees on employment, joint bodies of the social partners.

In 1984, a new law further strengthened the role of sectoral agencies by introducing an "obligation to negotiate", especially addressed to the social partners, for the objectives and facilities for training in the branches. This law also introduced a new instrument for training planning, the "*engagements de développement de la formation*" (EDDF), which stimulated companies to develop long-term training plans for at least 3 years ahead. It offered the business community the opportunity to make contracts with governmental authorities concerning the co-financing of these plans. In the first period, especially larger companies used this opportunity. Later, in the nineties, branch organisations, as representatives of the business community, began to play a more important role. From 1991 on, several interprofessional and sectoral agreements between the social partners strengthened this role and appointed the joint committees on employment as the responsible authorities in this field.

In 1988, the EDDF's were followed by a second type of arrangement between the government and the business community: the "*contrats d'études prospectives*" (CEP). These contracts between the government and branch organizations tried to stimulate research on (future) qualifications and training needs in order to provide training planning by sectoral agencies with an adequate information base. In 1993 the two instruments, EDDF and CEP, became connected, when it was stated that EDDFs on company level were subordinate to EDDFs on branch level and that it was desirable that a CEP preceded the conclusion of an EDDF. In order to gather adequate information the government installed regional "observatories" for employment and education. In certain cases, observatories were also installed on the level of branches, by the branch organisations themselves. In most cases, the joint committee on employment acted as the representative of the branch.

A third type of arrangements between public authorities and the business community was introduced in 1993 and resulted from the partial decentralisation

of vocational educational policies from the state level to the level of the regions. This was the "*contrat d'objectif*", an agreement between local communities and branch organisations concerning the execution of training activities in companies within the region. Such contracts tried to stimulate training for special target groups such as younger people and apprentices.

In 1993, the financial arrangements concerning training were also legally reformed. Until then, under the law of 1971, besides the sectoral training funds other special funds had been formed: funds for training of young apprentices, funds for small and medium sized enterprises and funds for financing of training of employees on an individual basis. The new law tried to rationalise these different financial circuits into a common format. From 1996 new institutions called *'organismes paritaires collecteurs agrées'* (OPCA) are in function. These operate according to the same principles: there is only one collecting organism per branch, this is at least working on a regional scale, it is jointly administrated by the social partners and it has to make a clear distinction between 'activités de collecte' and 'activités de formation'. Under this reform, the number of collecting institutions was reduced.

On the basis of these financial and institutional arrangements, in many branches specific *training policies* have been developed by the responsible agencies, in most cases the national joint committees on employment. Although there are many differences between branches regarding policy consultation, training policy objectives, training needs research and implementation of training, in many branches the joint committees on employment, the EDDFs and the CEPs have played a major role in the development of these policies. In some sectors these instruments acted as a catalyst for the organisation of training on a joint basis, and even for the institutionalisation of the branch as a separate level of association. In other sectors they consolidated an already existing institutional infrastructure. Recently, another new instrument has been introduced to develop sectoral training policies. The joint committees have been given the opportunity to introduce specific 'certificats de qualification professionnels' (CQP) for their branch. Some branches have used this opportunity to develop a system of branch certificates, legitimised in the collective employment agreement. In some cases (metallurgy, chemical industry), the new system is purely a registration of company demands, alongside the national educational certificates. In other cases (car repair sector, building and construction), it is complementary to national certification or it has been built on elements of it. The

instrument of CQPs is introduced mainly to bring more flexibility into the connection of education and employment.

Thus the French report concludes over years a *complicated system* of arrangements and institutions has been developed in the field of continuous training. Both public and private agencies participate in this system: the state, the regional communities, and the branches, with their professional and syndical organisations. Gradually, the branch organizations have become the dominant agencies in this field, because they occupy an intermediate position between the government and the companies and because they are the primary places where social partners can work together to fulfil the requirements of a decentralized educational policy. In this system, in principle, the state and the regions only intervene where the branches fall short: with respect to small and medium-sized enterprises, with respect to special target groups with a weak position on the labour market, with respect to cross-sectoral training needs and with respect to certain types of employment branches which are too weak to deal with. In this sense, finding the balance between sectoral policies, inspired by the social partners, and target group policies, inspired by the government, will remain one of the main issues of the future debate on training in France. It is expected that in the years to come the role of the regions will be strengthened, because they provide the place where the activities of the different agencies can be most coherently coordinated.

### 3.4 Germany

In Germany sectoral training systems have not been developed on the same scale as in France, Belgium and The Netherlands. In general, economic sectors have not been able to play a significant role in the implementation of training policy. In Germany, the systems for (initial) vocational education and continuing training appear to be much more separated than in the other three countries. Vocational education is regulated in detail by national and regional legislation, continuing training is solely subjected to the rules of the market. As a consequence, the significance of a sectoral approach differs strongly in these two segments. In the domain of (initial) vocational education, it is subordinate to public regulations and activities, in the domain of continuous training it is subordinate to activities on the level of private companies. Most sectors have not been able to establish themselves as separate, intermediate segments for training policy development.

As in the other countries, the role of the sectors in Germany is particularly articulated by the influence the *social partners* can have on the development of training policies. The German report firstly discusses their influence on (initial) *vocational education*. In this field, traditionally, the government (federal and regional) is the dominant actor, but through a number of legal reforms employers associations and trade unions have become increasingly involved during the last decades. A major development was the reform (Neuordnung) of the occupational structure which started in the seventies. By law, the social partners were given a key role in the elaboration of the reform procedures and in the procedures for establishing new occupational profiles, which could serve as a format for the revision of the vocational curricula. In the course of the operation, many branch organizations strengthened their influence over the standards concerning content and quality of the educational programmes for the occupations in their sectors. But, as the German report states, this was not always the case. Much depended on the specificity of an occupation. A distinction has to be made between occupations which are situated in specific branches (e.g. car mechanic, bank employee) and occupations which transcend existing branch borders (e.g. secretary, administrative employee). The more specific an occupation is, the more influence branch organizations, i.e. the social partners, could exert on its restructuring. Actually, this is still the case.

With regard to *continuing vocational training*, the situation is totally different. Here, there are no legal rules, the field is dominated by private enterprises. The sectoral level has only little significance with regard to training policy development. In principle, the social partners do have the opportunity to make agreements on training within the collective employment contracts, but in practice there are just a few sectors where they have actually done so. According to the German report, this has to do with a lack of consensus between the partners involved. Almost all of the trade unions have declared training to be an important issue and would like to include training arrangements in the collective contracts. But until now most employers organizations have been reluctant to do so. In their view training is the prerogative of company management, and collective arrangements threaten managerial autonomy. As far as it depends on the employers, the German report concludes, the perspectives for collective training agreements are very limited. The trade unions, for their part, look to the government and call for more legislation in this field.

However, the German report also stresses that within this general picture there are some *differences* between branches. In some branches a sectoral approach may be more fruitful than in others. Whether such an approach can be a meaningful option or not, depends on a number of factors:

- the level of organization of employers and employees; the less organized they are, the less fruitful a sectoral approach will be;

- the historically developed conflict structures; the more harmoniously relationships have developed, the implementation of a sectoral approach will be; with regard to this, traditions of sectors are very different;

- the level of homogeneity of a sector; the more heterogenous a sector's subsegments are, the more difficult it will be to cover the whole sector with a common approach.

Besides, branch traditions and culture with regard to training can play an important role. Branches with a well-established tradition in this field may succeed more easily in reaching consensus than branches which have to develop a training tradition from scratch.

The German report repeatedly stresses the *dominant role of companies* in the field of continuing training. In most cases, where they exist, branch regulations are no more than a precondition for decisions and actions taken on company level. Company management has the prerogative with regard to training. But, just like in The Netherlands, employers are legally obliged to negotiate training decisions with their employees, represented in the works council (Betriebsrat). Works councils can become involved in training in two different ways. First, they have to check whether branch agreements are actually observed in their own companies. Second, they can play an active role in the development of a company's training policy itself. They have been given legal rights for this proposal, i.e. the rights of information, consultation and codetermination. They have also the right to make specific agreements with the employer (Betriebsvereinbarungen), e.g. on the subject of training, which provide for consultations and activities with a formal base.

### 3.5 Greece

Until recently, only little attention was given in Greece to a sectoral approach, neither in training research nor in training policy development and implementation. The sectoral approach is still at an *embryonic stage*, there are only very few cases where a sector has articulated itself as a separate level for the organization of training activities.

The Greek report identifies several *disabling factors* contributing to this state of affairs. First, there is the dominant role of the state in the field of education and training. The Greek educational system is largely a public, school-based system, which puts high value on general education above vocational training. As far as vocational education is concerned, state activities are concentrated on the restructuring of initial vocational education. Continuing training is left to companies and the private sector. Secondly, there is the very limited role of the social partners with regard to training and the lack of tradition on their side in this field. The trade unions have only recently - since the restoration of democracy in 1974 - established themselves as effective actors in industrial relations. For them, the main priorities are the negotiations on wage policies; training is a subject of minor concern. The employers' associations have only recently - since the entry of Greece into the European Community in 1981 and the abolition of state protectionism - put training higher on the agenda. But for them also, it still has a low priority. Thirdly, there are some peculiar characteristics of the Greek economy: its low degree of industrialization, the predominance of very small companies in many sectors, the influx of large groups of low-qualified migrant workers onto the Greek labour market, which provide a reservoir of cheap labour, and the low level of 'trust' in employer/ employee relationships at company level.

Thus, in large parts of the Greek economy, sectoral agencies and policies are non-existent or still in a state of formation. With regard to continuing training the picture is rather *diffused*. There are some elements of a sectoral orientation in the Greek VET system, e.g. the state run 'sector schools' for tourism, merchant navy and the health and care sector. There are some active sectoral training organizations, e.g. in the banking sector. There are some sectoral initiatives, installed and cofinanced within the framework of EU funding, in particular from the structural and social funds. And there are some large 'sector-dominating' companies (e.g. in telematics), which provide company-based training with a broad,

sometimes sector-wide, range of application. The Greek report presents a typology to analyze differences between sectors with reference to training. Three broad categories of sectors are distinguished (p.14):

- ´sectors which have a holistic and integrated concept of sectoral educational and training policy, supported by an institutional network and a regulatory framework which maintains the existence of social dialogue´; only the banking sector falls into this category;

- ´sectors in which there are sector-oriented training activities, but they do not form a coherent framework; social dialogue is usually limited in the field of VET and the state often has an important role in providing training´; in this category belong some sectors, e.g. the sector of tourism and the leather, tanning and shoe industry;

- ´sectors in which a sectoral approach to training is almost non-existent; the contribution of the social partners is weak and the existing training activities take place through the formal training system´; this situation is characteristic for most sectors of the Greek economy.

The Greek report identifies a number of parameters that have played a determinant role in explaining the differences between sectors: ´the history and tradition of the sector in relation to social dialogue; the extent to which state ownership is dominant in the sector; changes in the regulative framework that may have occurred; the importance of the sector in respect to national economy; the dominance of large versus small enterprises in the sector; changes in the demographic features of the labour market, especially the influx of low-paid migrant workers; the extent to which mass technological innovations have been introduced; the existence of homogeneity within the sector; unexpected and important developments in the consumer market and changes in consumer behaviour; and fluctuations in the development of the economy in general or the sector in particular. All these factors may influence the reactions within a sector towards sectoral training issues. These reactions may differ from sector to sector' (p.13-14).

A circumstance, specific to Greece, is the influence of *European funding* in the field of continuing training. With the support of CSF and ESF funds some new Vocational Training Centres (KEK's) have been established recently, which operate

on a sectoral basis. Partly, this was a reaction to negative experiences with the implementation of training programmes, cofinanced by earlier CSF funds. These were often limited in scope, had little durable effects and were mainly focused on larger, public companies. The new system, based on a sectoral approach including sectoral certification, still has to prove its effectiveness.

Although the social dialogue is a recent development in Greece, it is expected that the role of the social partners in the field of training will be strengthened in the years to come. There are several institutes now, both on the employers' side and on the side of the trade unions, which promote research and social dialogue on training. And recently *new financial regulations* have been introduced with the aim of improving cooperation between the state, the public employment agency (OAED) and the social partners.

- The first is the 'Special Common Account for VET Programmes' (ELPEKE). This account draws its funds from the employers. All private companies are obliged to pay a 0.45% payroll levy to the OAED, which can co-finance training activities at company level with this money.

- The second is the 'Special Account for Unemployment' (EKLA), a fund based on a contribution of 0.36% from both employees and employers. With this account training for unemployed, labour market entrants and groups at risk can be co-financed.

- Under a new law, these two accounts will be unified into the Account for Employment and Vocational Training' (LAEK). This new fund will be jointly managed by representatives of the state, the employers' and the employees' organizations and will be presided over by the employment agency OAED. Training programmes are expected to be planned in consultation with sectoral agencies and finances to be allocated on a sectoral basis.

In fact, these arrangements are the first fruits of the social dialogue in the field of VET in Greece. How they will operate in practice and whether they will lead to a stronger articulation of sectoral training system, are still open questions. Their effectiveness has to be demonstrated in the years to come. The Greek report states that *further promotion* of the sectoral approach could have several advantages: it could partly bridge the gap between the now too strictly separated

spheres of education and employment; it offers the possibility to create a system that responds to the needs of the labour market in a quicker and more flexible way, and it could contribute to the development of further cooperation between the social partners. But the report also reveals some scepticism on this point. Training is very low on the priority lists of the social partners and the government, in so far as it decentralizes its educational policy, particularly aims at the regional level. In relation to sectors it demonstrates a certain eagerness to protect its domain.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The national overviews in this chapter demonstrate that, generally, the participating countries can be divided in two subgroups. There are three countries with well-developed sectoral training systems: the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Here, in a lot of sectors, conditions concerning the formation of sectoral training institutions and policies have been arranged, at least to a point at which agencies can start to execute training activities in practice. In particular, implementation problems come to the fore in these countries/sectors. In the other two countries - Germany and Greece - for a number of reasons, sectoral training systems have been less developed. Here, only a few sectors have developed training systems until now. On the whole, training is primarily organized within the context of the national educational system or in a rather diffuse way, with often a dominant role for companies and in-company training initiatives. In these countries, the (public) domain of vocational education and the (private) domain of continuing training are more sharply divided.

# 4. Applying a sector approach in training research

In the first chapter we argued that a sectoral approach is important in training research as well as in training policy. The relevance of applying a sectoral approach was demonstrated by pointing out that a number of differences exist between sectors which are important for or connected with continuing vocational training. These may account for sectoral differences in *training needs*. Sectoral training needs research can reveal those differences. A second argument in favour of a sectoral approach in research is the existence of differences between sectors with regard to actual *training practices*, in particular actual participation in training. Sectoral research, in particular comparative sectoral research, can provide more insight into the background to this diversity. We will discuss these two types of research - training needs research and research on training practices - separately in order to get a better understanding of how the sectoral approach can be applied in practice.

## 4.1 Training needs research

Sectoral studies on training needs can have very different contents and can take very different forms. As far as the *content* is concerned, mostly (some of) the following themes are involved:

- trends in the environment (economy, technology, organization of work, labour market, etc.) which influence occupations and qualifications in the sector;
- actual qualification requirements and their foreseen development;
- actual and foreseen discrepancies between required and available qualifications;
- actual and foreseen needs of training and retraining;
- available supply of training;
- actual and foreseen discrepancies between supply and demand for training;
- measures needed to match training supply and demand adequately;

With regard to the *design* adopted for research, an important distinction can be made between more quantitative versus more qualitative approaches and between a single, one moment type of research and longitudinal, time covering designs. Research can be organized on the sectoral level itself, by sectoral agencies, for

purely sectoral policy objectives. It can also be organized on the national level, by national agencies, in order to provide sectoral agencies with adequate information for decentralized policy making.

As the national reports demonstrate, sectoral training needs research has not been developed in every country in the same way. On the one hand, differences have to do with sectoral dynamics in terms of economic development, technological innovation, market changes, etc.; the more dynamic a sector is, the more changes in qualifications can be expected and the greater the urgency of training needs research will be. On the other hand, differences also have to do with the level of institutionalization of the sector as a separate space for CVT organization. This, in turn, depends partly on the autonomy left by the government for developing CVT policies at sectoral levels and on the capacities of the sectoral agencies involved to create such CVT policies. Sectors may differ with regard to their need for information and research; they also may differ with regard to their capabilities to deal with these needs.

In *Belgium* and *The Netherlands*, two countries with highly institutionalized sectoral training systems, research on training needs has been carried out in a multitude of sectors. Basically, two types of research can be distinguished. First, research on new occupational profiles, carried out in different sectors within the context of a revision of the programmes and curricula for (initial) vocational education. This research mainly focused on (new) needs for initial training, but most studies also contained relevant information for the development of programmes for further training. The angle from which they approach qualification is mostly not sector-oriented but occupation-oriented: they look for developments in qualification requirements and training needs in specific occupations, i.e. those occupations which are dominant in the sector. Secondly, there are many studies which have been carried out by sectoral agencies themselves and which focus on specific training needs, e.g. for specific occupations, specific functions or families of functions and specific categories of employees. Their objectives are usually limited; they are mostly designed to evaluate and adapt the existing training supply or to get adequate information for the development of new courses. In most cases, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used.

In *France* sectoral training needs research received important impetus from the establishments of the CEP's (prospective studies) at sectoral level and, in a later

stage, from the connection of these CEP's with the sectoral EDDF's (training agreements). Since the end of the eighties many branch organizations have applied the instrument of a CEP, but with big differences with respect to the content, the design, the execution of the studies, the dissemination of results, etc. An important element in the French case is also the establishment of observatories for the monitoring of (sectoral, regional) developments in employment opportunities and training needs. These provide an infrastructure for longitudinal types of research.

The situation in *Germany* is a little different. Germany is a country with a well-developed research infrastructure in the field of vocational education and training and for about twenty years much qualification research, also on sectoral level, has been done within the context of the reform ('Neuordnung') of the programmes for (initial) vocational education. Most of this research had an occupation-centred orientation and was carried out on a national scale. Research on training needs within the context of CVT development appears to have received less attention in Germany. Some sectors, e.g. ailing sectors as the mining industry and the steel industry, have taken special initiatives in this field, others sectors have not.

In *Greece*, it is only very recently that the sectoral approach has been applied in training needs research, i.e. in a number of sector studies of the IOBE analysing the inadequacies of supply and demand for education and training in these sectors and developing policy proposals to overcome the deficiencies. Besides these, some EU funded training projects have adopted a sectoral approach. With the recent establishment of some new research institutes, which in their programmes have adopted a sectoral approach, it can be expected that research efforts on sectoral training needs will increase in the future.

All the national reports stress the advantages of a sectoral perspective in training needs research as an instrument for providing valuable, in-depth information for training policy development, additional to the information already available from sectoral breakdowns of national census data. They also stress, however, the often large differences between sectors when it comes to the utilization of these advantages. Some sectors provide little opportunities for this, while in other sectors the opportunities are rather good. Much depends on the level of organization of the sector and the degree of transmission from the sectoral level to the level of the firms (we will elaborate this point further in the following chapters). According to the French report, sectoral training research itself can play an important role in

constructing a branch as a branch and in establishing a dialogue between the branch organizations and social partners involved. In other sectors, where organizations and partnerships already have been developed, it can consolidate the structures.

However, although stressing its relevance, the national reports also reveal a number of *limitations* to a sectoral approach to training research. The French report elaborates these most extensively, in relation to a discussion of practical experiences with the prospective qualification studies (CEP's) gained in France during the last five years. The following problems have become apparent here:

- The first problem concerns the precise *demarcation* of the field of study, i.e. the occupations or functions of which qualification needs have to be assessed. This, of course, has to do with the problem of the demarcation of the sector or branch involved. Branch organizations will usually opt for a demarcation as narrow and precise as possible, while government authorities will opt for a broader scope of the study. When branches and government collaborate in the study, as is the case, in the French CEP's this may raise conflicts of interest.

- A second problem has to do with the *reflexive capabilities* of the sectoral agencies themselves. As historical agencies, operating in a specific context, it will be difficult for them to transcend their own historical level of reflexivity. They will demonstrate an almost natural tendency to define problems in traditional ways and e.g. to choose research themes that stay within the traditional frames of reference. This may impede recognition of innovative developments.

- A third problem has to do with the *political character* of sectoral studies. Sectoral training research is often the result of a compromise in the Social Dialogue and is often carried out in close collaboration with the social partners. They often also have to agree upon the conclusions. There is a risk, however, that this procedure may blur existing conflicts of interest and that the research conclusions may give a harmonious picture of developments and needs within the sector. Heterogenity, which actually exists, may be defined away too easily because of the desire to reach consensus.

- A fourth problem concerns the *rigidity* of the defined qualifications and training needs in relation to the actual developments in the sector. The qualifications defined often reflect a rapid changing reality. In fact, as the French report states, they try to catch a 'reality which is in permanent construction'. Too rigid definitions of qualifications and training needs lack the necessary flexibility and quickly will become obsolete.

- A fifth problem concerns the question of how to deal with *transversal qualifications* and intersectoral mobility. In research focusing on a specific sector, qualifications which are cross sectorally applicable run the risk of getting too little attention. This is all the more undesirable as it can be expected that on the future labour market there will be an increased need for intersectoral mobility.

- A final problem has to do with the *target groups* for training. Training needs research set up by the sectoral agencies themselves will tend to focus in particular on the training needs of core groups of employees, i.e. qualified employees operating in those occupations and functions which are at the heart or at the forefront of new developments in the sector. Groups at risk will get lesser attention, although they are just as much, and perhaps even more, in need of training.

We think these problems surrounding CEP's are of a more general nature and not only limited to French sectoral research. It concerns serious problems which deserve the serious attention of the parties involved in training needs research. Especially in situations where the social partners themselves, for their own account, take the initiative on a sectoral study, adequate measures to guarantee objectivity and validity of the research results should be built in.

### 4.2 Research on training practices

A second type of research, which of course is closely related to training needs research, is the research on training practices in sectors. This includes both research on training *policies, provisions and programmes* and research on actual *participation* in training and on the *effectiveness* of training infrastructures in dealing with training needs. The relevance of a sectoral approach in this kind of research

is given by the existence of big differences in training provisions and training participation between sectors. Research on training practices may be carried out on a national scale. It can also be carried out on the sectoral level itself. In the latter case it can be seen as an instrument of self-reflexivity the sectoral training system uses to improve its performance.

In general, as the national reports demonstrate, research on actual training practices has been less developed than research on training needs in the five investigated countries. There is some research on sectoral training policies, provisions and programmes, mostly sectoral studies of a descriptive, qualitative nature. In some countries (Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands), there is also some research on actual participation in training in different sectors, mostly sectoral breakdowns of national census data. This research provides data on such indicators as participation ratios, expenditures for training, time spent on training by companies and employees etc.. But there is little specific research on the effectiveness of training in meeting a sector's qualification requirements. In Belgium and The Netherlands, and also in France, sectoral agencies sometimes take the initiative to organize evaluative studies of their training supply, which provide some information on the degree to which their programmes meet the sector's training needs. But, in general, such initiatives are pretty scarce, even in the countries with well-developed sectoral training systems.

Considering research on the *effectiveness* of sectoral training initiatives, the Belgian report states that careful attention should be given to the criteria with which the effectiveness will be assessed. In search of adequate criteria, the Belgian report proposes deriving them from the original objectives the sectoral initiatives have been set up for. In this regard it refers to the main function of the initiatives, i.e. to operate as mechanisms for the correction of market failures in the provision of training for companies and employees. Initiatives can then be assessed on the basis of criteria such as: do they improve the level of information on qualification requirements, training needs and training supply among companies and employees? Do they provide adequate training supply where individual suppliers stay behind? Do they lower and equalize costs for training, both for companies and employees? Do they stimulate a training-oriented climate in companies and willingness among employees to participate in training? Do they adequately tackle the problems of training leave at the company and employee level? Do they provide better training incentives for both companies and employees? Do they provide better access to training and a more equal allocation of training among different

groups of employees? The Belgian report concludes that much more empirical research is needed before well-grounded statements about the effects of these presumed advantages of collective association on the training market can be made. This, we think, is not only the case in Belgium, but also in the other four countries investigated.

When it comes to research on *sectoral training practices*, as the Dutch report states, we have to answer several interrelated questions of which the central question is: what factors determine or influence the specific training practice in a sector? A proper way to answer this question is using a comparative research design, which makes it possible to study differences and similarities between sectors in order to identify the main explanatory factors and mechanisms. Two *questions* are central in such studies:

- what are the differences in training practice between sectors?
- and what are the probable causes of or background to these differences?

In The Netherlands and in Belgium some research has been done on training practice in different sectors in recent years. However, as yet a research design comparing sectors has not often been applied. We only know three examples of such an approach. Aalders (1994) analyzed training practice in eleven sectors in The Netherlands, half of which are known as 'good practices' with respect to continuing training. Denijs (1995) made an overview of sectoral training initiatives in Belgium (Flanders region), containing key figures and facts about thirteen sectors, thus covering the majority of sectoral agreements. We ourselves have done research into continuing training, in which 45 branches and approximately 400 companies were involved. In this research we found big differences between the branches regarding training provisions, ways in which training needs are monitored and actual participation of employees in training (Van den Tillaart, et al, 1991).

This last point - the differences in *participation* in training - is a very relevant point for research into sectoral training policy. We will elaborate this point a little further. The outcomes of the sector studies mentioned above indicate that at least four factors play a prominent role in explaining the differences between sectors concerning participation in training.

The first factor concerns the sector history and closely connected with this the *training tradition*. Sectors vary in their training tradition. A famous example in The Netherlands is the printing trade. Already at the beginning of this century the social partners in this sector created an institutional framework for training to assure a skilled workforce. The only way to become a skilled labourer in this sector is by way of in-company training. The Dutch retail trade on the other hand is an example of a sector with a poor training history. Since 1990 this sector has welcomed about 75,000 newcomers every year. The educational system in the sector, however, delivers not more than 15,000 qualified people per annum. This means that most of the newcomers do not possess an adequate initial education. Knowing this, one would expect much continuing training in the retail trade. This however is not the case. Only 8 percent of the employees take part in continuing training, whereas the average percentage in all branches of the service sector is about 40. When recruiting workers, employers in the retail trade mostly do not demand any specific educational requirements. Most of them are far more interested in the client orientation, flexibility and adaptability of applicants (see also: Van den Tillaart, 1993).

The second factor concerns the *dynamics in the environment*. Although it is true that all companies have to deal with changes nowadays, the number, content and intensity of changes differ between sectors, which implies that the necessity of continuing training also varies. Aalders' Dutch study mentioned above distinguishes four environmental factors which are relevant in this respect: developments in technology, consumer market, labour market and in governmental policy.

1. Technological innovations may refer to products, to production processes or to both. In the last decade a significant acceleration has been taken place in the pace in which innovations are introduced. Research demonstrates that training in the eighties was strongly related to new technological developments in production processes, like process automation, new technical procedures and introduction of new types of production equipment. In the nineties these types of innovations will still be important, but nowadays many training efforts also result from new developments in the field of product technology.

2. Examples of important developments in the consumer market are product differentiation, segmentation of target groups and changing requirements

with respect to quality and time of delivery. These developments are often closely related to technological innovations. Nowadays, Aalders argues for instance, just-in-time deliveries are possible because one of the results of automation is the very quick handling of orders. Delivery of products in small batches has become much easier since the introduction of flexible manufacturing systems. The introduction of computer technology has caused an enormous expansion of product varieties in many branches of the service sector. However, sectors differ with respect to market and product diversity, and accordingly with respect to training needs and training efforts.

3. There developments in the labour market also occur and here demographic factors are highly relevant. Although every sector perceives the influence of the ongoing demographic process - in the case of the Netherlands fewer young people every year - this process has the biggest impact on sectors that are used to recruiting young and cheap people, as is the case in the retail trade sector. Sectors have to compete for scarce young labour. Some sectors have already started special training, recruitment and image campaigns to improve their position on the labour market and probably more will follow in the future.

4. The government definitely has much influence through making or changing laws and all kinds of regulations. In this respect laws and regulations regarding education and training as well as regarding labour, labour relations, labour conditions and environmental issues are of particular relevance. Important developments concern e.g. the ongoing process of decentralisation. Competences, tasks and responsibilities are moving from central to regional and sectoral levels, both in the field of education and in the field of labour. As a consequence, actors on local and sectoral levels get more and more room to take their own decisions with respect to employment and training policy. Such developments occur in all the countries investigated.

The third factor which can explain differences in participation in training, is the *policy of sectors themselves regarding education and training*. Here we have to refer to the distinction between the concept of the educational and training system of a sector and the concept of the educational and training policy of a sector. The first concept is used for all the educational and training provisions in or for a sector. When there are separate activities and initiatives from (individual) employers,

employees, training bodies and the public authority, one cannot speak of a real sectoral training policy. Such a policy requires the involvement of all actors and a certain degree of tuning of activities. In practice it means that a sectoral training policy is only possible when there exists an institutional network. In this respect sectors can differ a lot from each other.

The development of such an institutional network is in some sectors more likely than in others. A relevant circumstance - the fourth factor - here is the *homogeneity* with respect to products, production processes and types of companies. It happens to be a disadvantage when a sector consists of a small number of very large companies and many SMEs. This is clearly demonstrated by the retail trade sector. Large chainstores not only possess the possibilities, that is training expertise, provisions and facilities, but also have very strong economic arguments to opt for an individual training approach, that is to say an in-company training of their own staff. The decision of the large chainstores to manage their own training affairs places many SMEs in a difficult position. They have no adequate training facilities themselves and they cannot rely on provisions in the branch. So, the development of an institutional (training) network is more likely in a homogeneous than in a heterogeneous sector. Besides, for homogeneous sectors there are better chances that agreements between the social partners, like the Collective Employment Agreements, follow sectoral boundaries. Hence, in these sectors there are more chances to realize agreements on issues like training funds and training rights.

In this paragraph we have concentrated our analysis on finding explanations for the varying participation in training in different sectors. Of course there are a number of obstacles on the level of firms as well as on that of employees that hinder participation in training. Our opinion, however, is that these obstacles are well known and well documented. This is clearly not the case at the sectoral level. On this level we call for a sector-comparing research design, because we think that precisely this kind of research and analysis will bring more understanding and - as a result - relevant starting points for a sectoral training policy. Economic sectors differ a lot with respect to training tradition, training provisions and actual participation in training, and policy measures have to take these differences into due account. For such initiatives, sector studies on training policy can have a relevant function. They can visualize the differences between sectors and they can clarify their backgrounds. In that way, they can contribute to the development of specific sectoral policies and to the transmission of national and international

policy measures to the specific configurations existing in the sectors addressed by those measures. However, in designing these studies the concept of the sector should be used in a flexible manner. It should be defined in such an open way that changes within the actual sector structure can be easily incorporated.

### 4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the application of a sectoral approach in training needs research and research into training practices. In general, we can conclude that the perspectives for a sectoral approach in training research look good, because its relevance will increase still further in the coming years due to a general tendency to decentralize training policy making towards the sectoral level. With the greater autonomy and capacity of sectors to develop their own training policies and with the outgrowal of sectoral training systems, it can be expected that the need for sectoral information will increase. This will concern both detailed information on sectoral training needs as well as information on the performance and effectiveness of sectoral training systems.

At the same time, we must conclude that the practical opportunities for applying a sectoral approach to training research strongly differ from country to country and within countries from sector to sector, and that there are also serious limitations connected with a sole, isolated, unreflected application of a sectoral approach. These limitations especially come to the fore in training needs research. A purely sectoral approach runs the risk of giving a too narrow, too traditional, too harmonious and too rigid picture of the actual situation in a sector. It tends to focus on the 'stronger' groups and to repress heterogeneity within the sector. And it cannot adequately deal with transversal, i.e. cross-sectoral qualifications. These disadvantages require an adequate connection of sectoral research (results) with research from other perspectives, e.g. that of national, regional or local authorities.

# 5. Applying a sectoral approach in training policy

In this chapter we start with discussion of the second main theme of this study: the opportunities and limitations of the application of a sectoral approach in training policy development. After defining the room for a sectoral approach to training policy, we illustrate its opportunities with a number of examples from different sectors in the countries investigated. We analyze the main differences between the sectors and elaborate the different policy choices sectoral agencies can make. Then we discuss some of the problems which occur in the development of training policy on sectoral levels. This gives a first impression of the limitations connected with a sectoral approach. In the following chapters further limitations of a sector approach will be highlighted in a discussion of the main problems connected with the implementation of sectoral training policies.

## 5.1 Space for sectoral training policy

In the first chapter we have argued that a sectoral approach is a valuable frame of reference both for research in the field of continuous vocational training as well as with regard to policies aimed at the stimulation of this type of training. We pointed out that, though it is true that changes occur in the whole economy, it is also true that this general economic picture is built up of varying situations or patterns in different sectors. This means that training needs also vary by sector or branch with respect to their scope and nature. Varying needs can best be dealt with through varying policies. That, we think, is a first argument in favour of a sectoral approach to training policy development.

A second argument is that in most countries government decentralizes training policy development to a greater or lesser degree towards lower policy levels and gives the actors on those levels (training agencies, regional and local authorities, branch associations and trade unions) more autonomy in developing their own policy objectives and instruments (see also: chapter 2). As a consequence of decentralization along sectoral lines, the social partners in particular have been given an important role, both with regard to initial as well as continuing vocational training. In all the countries investigated, the social partners become more involved and get greater responsibilities for the development and implementation of training policy. An important instrument they can use for this is the Collective Employment

Agreement (CAO). Research in The Netherlands demonstrates that for some years the number of collective employment agreements which explicitly mention agreements on training is clearly increasing. Furthermore, since the mid-eighties, these training agreements are gradually getting a different character. A shift from rather limited agreements on financial reimbursements for training towards more strategic agreements on the overall stimulation of the training of employees and on the integration of training in sectoral training, employment and labour market policies (Hövels & De Vries, 1990). A very important step in this process was the establishment of 'training and development funds' in many sectors. These funds, jointly administrated by the employers' and employees' associations of a specific branch or trade, control the finances which the collective employment agreement allocates to training, for instance by way of a surcharge on salaries. With these financial resources CAO agreements on training rights can be remunerated or facilitated. A similar development took place in Belgium, where the sectoral initiatives were an offspring of new legislation for the financing of collective training funds in the seventies, and in France, where many the sectoral initiatives got strong impulses from the introduction by the government of special instruments for decentralized policy making, i.e. the legally obligatory training levies, the contracts concerning training planning and the prospective qualification studies. The social partners were appointed as the main implementing agents of these stimulation measures.

A third argument which pleads for a sectoral approach is the fact that not only the establishment but also the utilisation of good training provisions largely depends on the degree to which activities and policies of the actors involved are geared to one another. And in most cases these actors and institutions - like the social partners and the social dialogue - are organized along sectoral lines. It is in particular on the level of the sector that the social partners can exert their influence. Through their organizations and joint bodies they can stimulate participation in training. They can also easily act as speaking partners for agencies outside the sector who provide training or supportive services in the field of training.

### 5.2 Examples from different countries and sectors

In order to demonstrate in more concrete terms how a sectoral training policy can be developed and, in particular, how the involvement of the social partners in

sectoral training policy takes shape, we now describe in more detail the situation in some sectors, which were investigated more deeply in the national reports.

*The Netherlands: printing industry and elderly care*

The Dutch report describes several examples of sectoral training policies which have been developed in the last decade. Two of them will be discussed here: an example from the profit sector, the printing industry, and an example from the non-profit sector, i.e. the sector of intramural care for the elderly. Both sectors were ahead of others when it comes to the development of sectoral training policies.

In a study for the OESO Hövels & Van den Berg (1992) give a description of sectoral training policy in the Dutch *printing industry* (approximately 3000 companies with 60,000 employees). In the Netherlands, labour relations in the printing industry have some specific, corporatist characteristics. The trade unions have a strong position in the sector, because since 1914 trade union membership has been obligatory for every worker who is employed as a graphic craftsman. Together with the associations of employers, the trade unions have established various central institutions in order to protect and regulate the sectoral labour market. At the top of the building stands the so called Central Bureau. In this Bureau and its various committees, employers' and employees' organizations jointly develop sectoral policies with regard to all major issues, like technological innovation, employment policy, labour market developments and vocational education and training. In the course of time, they have, for instance, developed special regulations for the design of the structure of jobs in the printing companies (craftsmen/assistants ratio), for entry into the graphic occupations (recognized craft certificate), for the structure of vocational education, for the introduction of new technologies and for the training and retraining of employees threatened with the loss of jobs. Most of these regulations are formalized in collective employment agreements. With the aid of these regulations training policy can easily be connected with labour market and employment policy. The elaboration and realization of sectoral training policy is delegated to the 'Grafisch Opleidingscentrum' (GOC; Graphical Training Centre). This centre - the most important training institute of the branch - is also jointly administrated by the social partners. In the seventies and eighties, under the flag of the GOC, the sector developed a flexible and differentiated system of training provisions that came to be a model for many other branches in Dutch industry. The system consists of a set of

broad vocational curricula, which lay the basis for flexible craftsmanship, an extended supply of courses aimed at training and retraining, and specific facilities for in-company training, tailored to the needs of specific (groups of) companies or specific (groups of) employees. Recently, the course supply was still further differentiated by the introduction of credits for parts of the curricula and by the development of new courses for special target groups like immigrants and disabled persons. With its training supply the GOC takes care of both the training of new employees as well as the major part of the training and retraining of staff already employed in printing companies.

The second example we discuss is an example from the non-profit part of the economy, i.e. the *intramural care of the elderly* (approximately 1,500 institutions with 78,000 employees; Warmerdam, 1995). In this sector training policy received strong new impulses from some serious labour conflicts which occurred at the end of the eighties, as a consequence of bottlenecks on the labour market and within the institutions (scarcity of nurses, high work loads, bad labour conditions, wages lagging behind the private sector). Large wild cat strikes of nurses forced the government, the employers' associations and the trade unions to take measures to relieve the pressure on the labour market. As a result, the government raised an extra budget for employment measures and the social partners decided to establish a joint coordinating fund for the sector, the 'Arbejdsmarkt-, Werkgelegenheids- en Opleidingsfonds voor de Bejaardenoorden AWOB' ('Labour Market, Employment and Training Fund for the Homes for the Elderly). This fund receives its resources both from the government (state budget for the care of the elderly) and from the sector itself (money, released by collective bargaining), and it is jointly administrated by the employers' associations and the trade unions. The main tasks of the fund are to stimulate and coordinate labour market and training policies in the sector and to manage and implement the subsidy schemes created to support these policies. The fund subsidizes vocational education as well as projects in the field of training and retraining of staff. As the main coordinating institution, it has good opportunities to connect training activities with measures in the field of employment and labour market policy, and this is expressed in the subsidy schemes. Recently, for instance, a new subsidy scheme has been elaborated, which awards employers a whole 'package' of subsidies for a specific type of employee, i.e. lower qualified workers, hired on a temporary basis. The set consists of a financial contribution to salary costs, a reimbursement of the costs of training of these employees, financial compensation for the extra time needed to coach them in practice, and a bonus if

they can be granted a permanent appointment. So, in this instrument, training and employment purposes are intertwined. For the implementation of this and other equivalent types of instruments, the fund often closely cooperates with the sectoral employment service institutions, both on national and regional level.

*Belgium: the textiles industry*

In Belgium, the textile industry was one of the first sectors with a sectoral training initiative (Denijs, 1995). In 1984 the sector established its own institute for training and retraining as a consequence of a national government plan for the restructuration of the then ailing textiles sector. The sector was in a severe crisis, because of strong competition from low wage countries on the market for mass textiles, and there was a broad consensus between government and the social partners that the only way for survival was a concentration of the Belgian manufacturers on high quality products. In order to implement this strategy, huge investments in new technology were made, which required adequately trained personnel. The training centre which was established, the COBOT, was supported with governmental subventions, but was autonomous with regard to its policy decisions. The centre has developed its own training supply, it offers courses, develops training material and provides consultancy services for individual companies. It also acts as an intermediary between companies and other institutes on the training market. As one of the few sectoral initiatives, the centre is recognized by the national Employment Exchange, which implies that it has access to the funds for training and retraining of the unemployed. So, the programmes are used both by employees and by the unemployed. But the centre remains autonomous in its training policy decisions.

*France: the plastics industry*

The French report gives a description of sectoral training policy in the French plastics industry. It presents this sector as a good example of a sector where the actors have developed a real sectoral training policy using the instruments given to them by the state. The sector has defined an overall policy, which covers the training infrastructure, qualification forecasting and the programming and certification of both initial and continuing vocational training. Since 1985 the sector

has negotiated four training contracts (EDDF´s) with the state; in 1991 it signed its first prospective study contract (CEP). The results of this study provided the basis for the latest sectoral training plan, which among other things defined special policy objectives for the training of in-company tutors for young apprentices. Recently the branch also introduced a new system of branch certificates (CQP) for the retraining of employees and an observatory to monitor trends in occupations and qualifications in the sector. In order to finance these activities the branch organization could make use of the training fund of the plastics industry, an institute jointly administered by the employers and the trade unions. The sector is currently working on the establishment of new structures on regional level. The decentralization of the governments educational policy makes it necessary to establish new partnerships and planning procedures with regional and local authorities. All these activities in the field of training, the French report states, contribute themselves to the emancipation of the plastics industry as an autonomous, full-grown partner of its main ´client branches´, the chemical and the automotive industries.

*Germany: the chemical industry*

In the German report the chemical industry is presented as a sector where institutions and regulations developed on the sectoral level have a clear influence on in-company activities in the field of continuing training. As we have seen in chapter two, in most sectors in Germany this influence is less present; usually, continuing training is solely a prerogative of company management itself. Two factors are responsible for this special position of the chemical industry. First, the high pressure of rationalization and modernization on the employment structures and qualification requirements in the companies. This stimulated the development of new occupational profiles in production departments, for whom employees had to be trained and retrained. New programmes were introduced in initial vocational education, but also many new training programmes were developed within the companies themselves. Continuous training became relatively more important. This tendency then - and that´s a second factor - is embedded within a specific branch structure, which was marked by a cooperative orientation of the social partners. In the last decade several regulations have been laid down in the Labour Contracts which further stimulate training of employees. The most important of them are: the regulations concerning the structuring of occupation and wages,

which have established a strong relationship between promotion and further training; the installation of a branch committee and a branch institute for further training; and specific training measures in the sphere of environmental protection. All these agreements are jointly financed and administered by the social partners. Apart from this, according to German law, the social partners are also highly involved in the elaboration of uniform standards for continuous training exams.

*Greece: the banking sector*

The Greek report elaborates the example of the banking sector. As the report states, in Greece this is the sector with the most advanced sectoral training policy. In fact, it is the only sector where a fully-developed training system has come into existence. Several factors have contributed to this special position: the existence of a powerful trade union in the sector; the joint experiences of the major banks, which in the recent past all were state-owned; the similarity of operational procedures and products; and the pressing need for change due to investments in new technology and products and the introduction of new legal requirements. The employers' organization, the Greek Banking Union, established and now runs its own training centre, which mainly plans and implements programmes of continuing training. The current collective Labour Contract ensures that the trade union participates in the board of this centre. Apart from this, the Labour Institute of the trade unions run their own programmes for continuing training. Recently, within the framework of the Social Dialogue several new initiatives have been taken by the social partners in order to stimulate training still further: provisions have been made for the joint formation and operation of an employment observatory; studies on sectoral training needs have been published; plans for the creation of an Institute of Bank Studies have been made; and the social partners have started a discussion about an eventual establishment of a joint Institute for the Certification of Banking Studies in the future. The Greek report stresses that, with this infrastructure and these joint initiatives of the social partners, the banking sector is an exception in the Greek economy.

### 5.3 Different policy choices

These examples prove that the social partners are strongly involved in training matters. At the same time it is clear that their involvement results in a diversity of training policies and training structures. As the examples and other information in the national reports point out, the major differences concern:

- The degree to which training decisions are *externalized* by companies and responsibilities for training are actually transmitted to sectoral bodies. In the case of the German chemical industry externalization is rather limited, even if this is a sector with a well-developed training policy on branch level. Sectoral regulations are mainly seen as preconditions for autonomous management decisions on company level. In the case of Belgium and The Netherlands transmission of responsibilities to joint bodies on sectoral level is much more common.

- The level of *cooperation* between employers and employees associations in the field of training. In some cases, as e.g. in the Greek banking sector, sectoral initiatives originated primarily from the side of the employers. The trade unions only became involved at a later stage. In most of the other cases, cooperation was more intense from the beginning. Especially the inclusion of training in collective bargaining gave strong stimuli to joint policy development. Training agreements in the Collective Labour Contracts thereby can cover a broad, varying range of subjects.

- The regulations concerning *training rights* and study leave for employees. In some sectors employees have been granted individual rights to training, while in other sectors this is not the case. Where there are regulations, they can have a very different character.

- The *financial arrangements* for training. Mostly, training is financed by a levy on gross wages of the companies within the sector, but the amount of the training charge can vary and also the levy system may be different. An important difference is e.g. whether the charge is wholly paid by the employers or whether the employees also contribute. Another important difference concerns the legal 'back-up' of the system. In Belgium and France for example a training levy is prescribed by law, while in The Netherlands

the establishment of a training fund is a matter of agreement between the social partners.

- The range of *training activities* which are financed out of the charge. Sometimes all types of training come in for a compensation from the sectoral training fund, whereas in other sectors only courses and other training activities supplied by the sector's own vocational training centre are reimbursed.

- The degree to which continuous training policies are connected with policies in the field of *initial vocational education*. In some sectors policies and policy agencies in these two fields are strongly connected, while in other sectors such connections do not exist. An important related question here is whether or not a sector develops its own system of certification, the plastics industry in France has done. As the French report stresses, branch certification systems in turn may take different forms.

- The degree to which continuous training policies are connected with *employment and labour market policies*. In some sectors only training programmes are developed or supported by the sectoral funds, while in other sectors a broader range of activities is supported, like projects for additional employment or labour market campaigns. See e.g. the activities of the employment and training fund for elderly care in The Netherlands.

- The degree to which sectoral agencies have established provisions for *anticipation* of employments shifts and training needs. Some sectors have installed a permanent observatory for research and monitoring of trends in occupations and qualifications, the plastics industry in France. Other sectors have not. For forecasting, they rely on existing databases or on special surveys in the branch.

We may assume that these differences have to do with both extra-sectoral and intra-sectoral factors. The factors mentioned in the previous chapter surely will play a role. But, in general, from the national reports we can conclude, that, as yet, only little research has been done into the factors which can explain the existing differences between sectors with regard to training policies. The same holds for their effects. Such research is of course highly relevant to improve existing training provisions.

### 5.4 Formation problems

In the sectors described above continuing training has got strong impulses from the development of sectoral training agreements, funds, policies and provisions. Especially the sectoral training funds have contributed a lot to the improvement of the infrastructure for training. But, as we have stated before, the examples described are 'good practices', in the sense that they all represent situations where sectoral agencies successfully cooperated in developing sectoral training programmes and implementing these programmes on company level. Not everywhere, however, the picture is as rosy as that. In every country there are still many sectors where sectoral provisions have hardly been developed and where one can hardly speak of sectoral policies whatsoever. In these sectors sectoral initiatives appear to meet serious bottlenecks. Those bottlenecks, or *formation problems*, reveal some of the limitations of a sectoral approach to training policy development.

The examples, described above, demonstrate that the development of a sectoral training policy is not an easy task. Several preconditions have to be fulfilled. In the first place, the sector has to have organizations which have enough power and authority to represent the different interest groups within the branch in internal and external (vis-à-vis the government, training institutes, etc.) consultation and negotiation processes. Secondly, it presumes that these organizations are willing to make joint agreements on training, to develop a common vision on training policy and to gear their activities to one another. Connected with this is a third precondition, i.e. the willingness within the sector to invest actually in training on a collective basis, which implies the loss of some autonomy of the individual actors. Finally, a direct interest in sectoral initiatives has to be perceived, in the sense that there is an awareness that collective efforts can cope with a number of bottlenecks in training on the individual level and that thus some essential needs can be met, which otherwise would stay unfulfilled.

As the national reports demonstrate, these are strict conditions, which are not fulfilled branches in many branches. Several factors appear to be responsible for that: the company structure of the branch, in particular its heterogeneity with regard to products, production processes, company organisation, applied technology, etc.; the rate and pace of technological innovation and, related to that, the processes of sectoral diversification and restructuration; the degree of association within the branch of both employers and employees and the strength of their organization;

and the tradition of training and training policy consultation within the branch, especially between the social partners and between the social partners and the government. We may presume that in heterogeneous sectors, with a strong technological dynamic, borders under pressure, weak branch organizations and a limited training tradition, sectoral initiatives will be developed less easily than in sectors characterized by the opposite state of affairs. Where this kind of unfavourable conditions exist, it will not be easy to tackle the bottlenecks to training. A training agreement between the social partners, in whatever form, seems to be a basic condition for a sectoral dynamic in this field. If this is concluded, the next obstacles in the policy process appear to be taken away more easily.

But also where social partners have come to an agreement and sectoral policies have been developed, we have to bear in mind the limitations of a sectoral approach mentioned in the previous chapter in the discussion of sectoral training needs analysis. These limitations are a consequence of the fact that the policies developed are the results of political negotiations and, as such, primarily reflect the interests and compromises of the dominant (sectoral) agencies involved. Policies run the risk of focusing on a too narrow domain, ignoring e.g. transversal qualifications and intersectoral mobility, of staying too much within traditionally applied frameworks, thereby ignoring new promising innovations, of presuming a too harmonious picture and covering up subsectoral heterogeneity and discontent, and of directing efforts too much to the core groups within the sector, at the cost of groups at risk, like lower qualified employees, temporary workers, migrant workers and other categories with a weak position on the labour market. Therefore, as we have argued in the previous chapter, in our view sectoral training initiatives should not stand on their own, but should be closely connected with other segments of the system of vocational education.

### 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the application of a sectoral approach in training policy development. A number of examples from different sectors demonstrated the opportunities of such an approach for the establishment of a sectoral training infrastructure and the stimulation of training activities. The examples also demonstrate the variety of choices sectors make in their training policy, e.g. with regard to policy consultation, training rights, financial arrangements, subvention

instruments, anticipation measures and with regard to the connection of training policy with employment and labour market policies and policies in the field of initial vocational education. All in all, especially in Belgium, France and The Netherlands, many sectors have established a remarkable record in the last decade.

However, we also discussed the less rosy part of the picture, i.e. the limitations of a sectoral approach for training policy development. On the one hand, these have to do with the preconditions which have to be fulfilled for a sector to become able to start a policy development process. Many sectors meet serious formation problems, in the sense that they are not able to organize the necessary institutions for developing and deploying joint initiatives. On the other hand, in cases where sectoral policies do come into existence, there are also limitations inherently connected to the risks sectoral policies run because of their political, interest-based character: a too narrow focus on sector specific qualifications, traditional domains, homogeneous segments and sectoral core groups, at the cost of transversal qualifications, innovative developments, heterogeneous subsegments and categories of workers with a weaker position within the companies and on the labour market. In order to compensate for these disadvantages, sectoral initiatives should be adequately embedded within the total system of vocational education.

# 6. The implementation of a sectoral training policy

In the previous chapter we discussed the application of a sectoral approach to policy development in the field of continuing training. We concluded that many sectors have achieved remarkable results during the last decade, in the sense that they elaborated a broad range of training programmes and provisions. However, the development of good provisions on the level of the sector is often not enough. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for actually bringing employers and employees to training. In many branches, in particular small business, there is a great distance between the level of the sector and the level of the individual firms. Practice has proven that entrepreneurs, especially entrepreneurs in small and medium-sized companies, are difficult to address from sectoral policy circuits, and that it is often hard to influence their decisions from this level. Research demonstrates that this also holds for decisions in the field of training.

In this chapter we look at the problem of training policy implementation. In particular, we will highlight the strategies which can be used to tackle implementation problems and to make sectoral policies more effective on firm level. The question is addressed here mainly on the basis of the Belgian and Dutch national reports, because in these two reports implementation problems are most urgently stressed.

## 6.1 Problems of implementation

Of the five countries investigated, Belgium and The Netherlands are the two countries with the most developed sectoral training systems. In the national reports of both of these countries serious difficulties are signalled regarding the implementation of sectoral initiatives on firm level.

Illuminating is e.g. the history of the target group definition for training of the Belgian employment fund, established according to the interprofessional training agreement of 1988 (0.18% measure, see chapter 2). In the first instance, this definition was very narrow. It formally limited subventions to the unemployed, and within the unemployed to the weakest groups, like the long-termed unemployed, the disabled, and poorly qualified workers. But in practice, this definition did not work. Only a few sectors stuck strictly to the legislators' definition of 'risk groups'. The Belgian report states: 'Many sectors took initiatives for target groups which did not belong

to the categories imposed by the government. Right from the start, therefore, the original target group approach was neglected. The compromise whereby, on the one hand, an interprofessional definition of risk groups was neglected and, on the other hand, the allocation of means was entrusted to the sectors, appeared not to work...it is no secret that there was little difference of opinion between the social partners on the expansion of the target groups´ (p. 19). This practice was taken for granted. During the following years, every time the training agreements had to be renewed - and that was the case every two years - revisions were made in order to adapt the legal system more to the actual practices in the sectors, and that actually meant a shift of emphasis from the weakest groups - narrowly defined - to the group of employees as a whole, though formally the definition of 'groups at risk' is still maintained. Sectoral agencies got more and more autonomy to allocate resources according to their own intentions. Evaluating the performance of the sectoral initiatives, in particular the training funds, the Belgian report signals serious deficiencies: 'Research...indicates that sectoral training initiatives...result in an increase in training intensity, but that the better qualified benefit the most from this' (p. 51).

In The Netherlands the government is less involved in sectoral training initiatives than in Belgium. Here, initiatives for training on the sectoral level are left to the business community itself. In practice, from the start, most initiatives aimed at companies and employees rather then at the unemployed, although the risk groups on the labour market also belong to the target groups of most Dutch sectoral training funds. The Dutch report refers to a recent study of training of employees in 45 branches and 400 small business companies (Van den Tillaart et al, 1991). This study shows that there are great differences between sectors as far as it concerns the availability of training provisions and the actual participation of employees in training. There are branches with good provisions and there are branches in which provisions are hardly developed. Some branches have high participation figures, in other branches figures are very low. In many branches with good training provisions there are also many firms with an active training practice. But good provisions are in no way a guarantee for a high participation rate among firms. There are branches with good provisions, where only a limited number of firms are actively involved in training. This fact suggests problems in the sphere of implementation. The branches concerned indeed do locate the main bottlenecks on the level of the firms: employers do not recognize the need for training, they are not capable of articulating training needs, they cannot find the way to the training institutes, or they cannot bear the

consequences of the educational leave of absence. The employers themselves recognize these bottlenecks, but they also point to bottlenecks on the level of the sector. According to them, problems are also caused by the fact that the sectoral training supply does not fit well enough with the training needs in their companies.

In this connection it is relevant to look at the experiences of the Dutch sectoral training funds. These experiences also indicate that it is difficult to stimulate training from the level of the sector. Although there is little empirical research available, it is clear that experiences are not only positive. As the Dutch report states, in a lot of sectors training funds are insufficiently used and subsidies stay in the cashbox. In some sectors, where every year a growing amount of money from collective bargaining is added to the funds, this has lead to 'reservoirs' of unused resources. Despite clearly visible needs, employers hardly make use of the training supply these branches offer to them. In some cases the social partners decided to transfer the remaining training resources to funds for other social policy targets, like stimulation of early retirement of elderly workers and creation of additional jobs for long-term unemployed. That also indicates serious bottlenecks in the sphere of implementation.

### 6.2 Measures to improve implementation

Both in Belgium and in The Netherlands branch organizations are aware of the problems of implementation and they have developed a range of measures to cope with them. In general, two types of measures can be distinguished: measures to make employers and employees more aware of the sectoral training supply and to encourage them to make use of the training possibilities; and measures to bring the training supply physically closer to the companies and the employees.

The Dutch report refers to a recent study of training policy implementation in which 59 branches were involved. De Vries & Van Geest (1992) identified six instruments which branch organizations use to stimulate companies to use sectoral training facilities:

- written information, spread by brochures, trade journals, etc.;
- catalogues of the training supply;
- training consultants;

- financial provisions and subventions;
- support for companies in developing training policies and training plans;
- regulations for day release for training.

De Vries & Van Geest explicitly mention that all these instruments can be applied more or less intensive and in all kinds of combinations. On the basis of case studies in the Dutch road transport sector and the Dutch metal industry respectively De Vries & Hövels (1991) come to the conclusion that each of these sectors has its own models of implementing the training agreements, made at sectoral level, in companies. The road transport sector is characterized by a so-called *supply-model*, stressing in particular the awareness of companies of a well-defined training offer. In the second model, called an *effort-model* by Hövels and De Vries, which was implemented in the metal industry, the stimulation of actual participation in training courses is most important. In this Dutch study, De Vries & Hövels analyzed only two sectors. It is beyond question that in reality there is much more diversity. Until now (too) little research has been done into this phenomenon and into the effects that different models of training implementation have on actual participation in training.

The Belgian report also gives a short overview of the 'activation tools' the Belgian training funds use to attract the attention of companies and employees. Written information is provided by almost every fund, in the form of advertisements and (direct) mailshots. Very often, journals of employers' associations and trade unions are used for advertising. Course prospectuses are only used in a number of exceptional cases. Various sectors, on the other hand, use training consultants who visit the companies. They have a double function, the report states: 'They usually combine both the activation function and the assessment of needs. Consultants are of the utmost importance, especially in those sectors which have no training tradition and which possess little knowledge of relevant facts' (p. 37). Subsidy regulations are also an important tool, used in many sectors. Support for training plans within companies, an extremely intense form of activation, is seldom applied. It exists in only three sectors and it is combined there with an assessment of training needs in the companies involved.

A second strategy for branch organizations is the use of instruments to move the training supply physically closer to the companies. The Dutch and Belgian sectoral training institutes create more and more opportunities to organize training courses

within companies, often on the basis of a specific contract and geared to the specific wishes of the company. Training is then supplied within the employer´s and employee´s own geographical environment. In this regard also the policy of *regionalization* of the sector funds is important. In several branches in The Netherlands, at the instigation of the social partners, the sectoral funds have decentralised their training facilities to the regional level and have established partnerships with other (regional) institutions being active in the area of labour market and training policy. In the Dutch printing industry for instance the GOC now delegates the execution of courses to five graphical lycea spread all over the country. In the Dutch health and care sector a main point of policy of the sectoral training funds has been the development of regional partnerships between auxiliaries of the sector fund and the regional employment service agencies; at this moment in almost all regions formal cooperation agreements have been made, in which also arrangements about continuous vocational training are included. The social partners in each of these two sectors see this regionalization policy as an important instrument for bringing sectoral provisions closer to the companies.

In Belgium also the question of regional decentralization is a much debated issue among the sectoral initiatives. Awareness is growing that initiatives at the regional level are better able to establish adequate contacts with companies and adapt training provisions to local circumstances. In Belgium the sectoral training initiatives traditionally have stronger relations with the public employment service. A parallel process of regional decentralization of the public employment agency has led to a new phenomenon: agreements between the sectoral training initiatives and the employment service to establish cooperative institutions on the regional level. For the training initiatives, these institutions (steering groups, platforms, joint projects) provide valuable tools to bring their supply closer to their target groups.

The two types of instruments mentioned above are both instruments which can be deployed by branch institutions. As such, they are instruments of institutions which are external to companies. However, in many companies there is also an internal institution which can have forceful instruments to stimulate a company's training policy: the works council. In particular in The Netherlands and in Germany works councils have a pre-eminent role in the social dialogue at company level. This makes these works councils also the most suitable institution to translate general sectoral training agreements into tailor-made arrangements at the level of individual companies.

That is the reason why we now want to devote a separate paragraph to the role of these works councils. In particular, we will highlight the situation in The Netherlands, because recent empirical research is available on the involvement of works councils in training policy at company level for this country. Where possible, the Dutch figures will be compared with information from Germany.

### 6.3 The role of works councils

In 1950 the Works Council Act (WOR) introduced the 'ondernemingsraad' (OR; works council) in The Netherlands as an body of cooperation between employer and employees on the enterprise level. At present all Dutch enterprises with more than 35 employees are under the obligation to set up a works council. Meanwhile about 70 percent of these enterprises have actually fulfilled this obligation; a percentage amounting to even more than 90 percent in enterprises with more than 100 employees. The number of members on the council depends on the size of the enterprise. The minimum member of works council members is 3 (for enterprises with 35 to 50 employees), and the maximum number 25.

In 1979 the WOR was radically changed. There was not only a change in the works council's general objective - in addition to cooperation and promotion of interests of employees - but also in its structure. Up to 1979 the employer automatically acted as chairman of the OR. After the 1979 change of the WOR, the works council consists of employees only who elect a chairman from among themselves. A third important change was a considerable extension of the OR's competence by the introduction of the right of approval. In addition, training and training facilities have been considerably improved with the foundation - in 1975 - of a common works councils training and advisory service (GBIO). With these changes, the works council has obtained a strong position on the micro-level of labour relations. In The Netherlands the work council has in fact succeeded in the past decade in monopolizing the promotion of interests of employees on the enterprise level.

Post-war Dutch trade union policy has also contributed to the fact that the works council has succeeded in gaining such a strong position on the enterprise level. The Dutch trade union has explicitly made the choice to manifest itself first and foremost on a central and a sectoral level, in order to contribute in this manner to the promotion of the Welfare State. Therefore, it is the most important defender of the employees'

interests in the consultations and negotiations on social and economical affairs on a national and sectoral level. Its position however on the level of the enterprise is more controversial. A negative side effect of the chosen trade union strategy was also that the Dutch trade union could not really take root in enterprises (Smit et al., 1995). The trade union's limited visibility on the enterprise level, in combination with the extension of the Welfare State made the need for the advantage of trade union membership less visible for many employees and the rate of organization dropped from almost 40 to 25 percent between 1970 and 1990. For a considerable time both trade union and works council were reasonably well off with the existing division of spheres of influence, although there were some attempts on the part of the trade union to manifest itself better on the enterprise level (Looise, 1989). The trade union, however, did not succeed in the establishment - in addition to the works council - of independent and viable departments in enterprises (Smit et al., 1995). The decentralisation tendencies in the working conditions that turned the enterprise much more into 'the forge where the labour relations take shape' (Smit et al., 1995), bring the trade union's strategic weakness, its absence on the enterprise level, into very sharp focus. At the moment the trade union acknowledges that its attempts to change this by way of 'enterprise work' have failed and it accepts the dominant position of the works council within enterprises. As yet, most trade unions are aiming more and more at strategic coalitions with works councils, in which the trade union members in the work councils are the central link (Smit et all., 1995). Such a strategy also stands to reason in as much as a clear majority of the works council members is at the same time a trade union member. For the rest, this trade union strategy has also its advantages for the works councils. More and more Collective Labour Agreements (CAO's) concluded by trade union include special competencies for works councils. In 1987 this applied to 54 percent of all CAO's and in 1994 this increased to 72 percent (Smit et al., 1995).

According to the present legislation the works council has a number of important tasks within the enterprise. Thus, it is the works council's task to stand up for the personnel's interests and to consult with the manager on behalf of the personnel as to the way in which the enterprise is both run and the way it is functioning. The promotion of both mutual work-counselling and good working conditions also come within this specification of duties. So, the works council very clearly acts as the employees' representative on an enterprise level. Consultation with the manager takes place in the 'consultative meeting', which ought to take place at least six times a year.

The WOR confers four rights of employees' participation to the works council.

1. The works council is first of all entitled to all kinds of information reasonably necessary for the fulfilment of its task. The employer is obliged to provide the required data in time and, if necessary, in written form. Also, the OR is entitled to a certain amount of regular information, such as annual reports, annual accounts etc.

2. A second right of the OR concerns the advisory right. The manager is obliged to seek the OR's advice whenever important financial economic decisions or those relating to the enterprise's management are on the agenda.

3. The right of approval is the third acquired right of the OR. If a manager wishes to lay down or modify certain arrangements in the field of the enterprise's social policy, this should be submitted to the OR for approval. Arrangements in relation to education and training of personnel also fall under this right of approval.

4. Last but not least, the OR possesses the right of initiative. So, even though uncalled for, the council can issue advice and make proposals.

In Germany works councils have equal laws. A difference with The Netherlands, however, is that German ORs also have the right to conclude an agreement with their employer, which formally legitimizes appointments made on issues and procedures of social policy (Betriebsvereinbarungen). These agreements have a legal status and are powerful instruments for the OR in the decision-making process. With their legal rights, works councils are also highly equipped in relation to the educational policy in enterprises. This, then, brings us to the question of the real role played by OR's in the development of the training policy in their enterprise.

Recently, the GBIO and some partners in Germany did some research in this field as part of the FORCE programme (van den Tillaart et al., 1995). In this study information was gathered from more than 700 ORs both in The Netherlands and Germany by means of written questionnaires and case studies, and it has yielded detailed insight into the part played by ORs in these two countries in the formation of training policy in enterprises. The most important results of this inquiry will be described below. In that way we can give an idea of the extent to which ORs do, in

fact, actually realize their potential facilities for the transmission of sectoral training initiatives to an enterprise level. We describe the role played by ORs with reference to data concerning the actual training policy in the enterprises.

For slightly less than half of the enterprises examined by us, we found a (relatively) good training policy. For one-third of the enterprises, and this applies both to The Netherlands and Germany, we found hardly any or no training policy at all. There is no relationship between the sector the enterprise belongs to and its policy in the field of personnel training. About half the ORs are satisfied with both the amount and quality of training activities in their enterprise. As a matter of fact, ORs in enterprises with a very well-developed training policy are far more satisfied with quantity, quality and general accesiblity of training activities in their enterprise than ORs in enterprises with hardly any or no training policy at all.

Most ORs make attempts to contribute to training practice and training policy in their enterprise. They are active in various manners, listed below:

- More than half of both Dutch and German ORs pay attention to aspects of training in their discussions or negotiations on relevant business matters. Besides more than three-quarters of ORs also put training policy and/or training practice in their enterprises, periodically, on the agenda as an independent item.
- Half the ORs assist in proposals on the part of the manager to create more clarity in the training policy by making arrangements and rules in this field and/or take themselves initiatives in this direction. This, for instance, concerns agreements and rules on the available facilities and the conditions to make them available, but it also concerns ways in which to clarify whose responsibility training is and by who, respectively in ways needs of training are being determined. A considerable part of ORs attempts to improve the accessibility of, the participation in and the utility of training activities for employees.
- One-third of ORs occasionally appeal to experts in their attempts to improve the practice of training, the training policy in their enterprise. This mainly concerns internal experts such as a training official. To a lesser extent persons from outside such as experts from training institutes or trade union are appealed to.

- An important question within the research's framework was how far ORs play a part in the implementation of Collective Labour Agreements on training. It appears that half of the ORs are keeping a more or less careful watch that these agreements are kept in their own enterprise.

Forty percent of ORs play hardly any or no part at all in the formation of training policy in their enterprise. At most they are active in only one of the four fields mentioned above.

Not nearly all ORs are really satisfied with the results of their attempts to establish a (better) training policy in their enterprise. Of both Dutch and German ORS, slightly more than half are not satisfied with the results obtained. Various causes appear to lie at the root of this. They, on the one hand, emanate, above all, from the enterprise's structure, but on the other hand these causes also lie in the way works councils themselves are functioning. Specifically,the following problems have to be tackled:

- The ORs' expertise in the field of training is insufficient. Dutch ORs' mention this (45%) as a bottleneck more often than German ORs (31%).
- ORs have insufficient legal qualifications or other points of application, such as, for instance, training agreements in the CAO. Both German (39%) and Dutch Works councils (42%) experience this about equally often as a bottleneck. This is, in fact, a notable result since German ORs have slightly stronger legal means at their disposal than Dutch ORs. As a matter of fact, German ORs can make legally valid agreements with the manager by means of the so-called 'Betriebsvereinbarungen' (enterprise's agreements). Research among German ORs also points out, however, that so far only a very limited number of ORs will or can avail themselves this right.
- There is no favourable training climate in the enterprise. In these enterprises the importance of personnel training is hardly acknowledged, if at all. Consequently, there is usually no training expertise (for instance, a training official) and/or training facilities in these enterprises. 42 percent of both German and Dutch ORs considers this a bottleneck.
- Or does not receive timely or full information about training projects/training programmes offered by the enterprise. This is a bottleneck for 24 percent.

- There is no good training supply c.q. the latter is not generally well perceived. One-fifth of both Dutch and German ORs considers this a bottleneck.

Therefore, a considerable part of ORs hold the view that they possess insufficient competencies and/or insufficient expertise to offer a better contribution to the realisation of a good training policy in their enterprise. It is, therefore, not surprising that many ORs consider the extension of their competencies and the enlargement of their expertise as important options to reinforce the part they play in this field of policy. In all, two-thirds of ORs expect to be able to learn how to play a (better) part in the development and shaping of training policy in their enterprise by means of specific training; most ORs turned out to be able to articulate clear training needs.

Neither is it surprising that the supporters of an increase in competence can be found primarily with the ORs which experience bottlenecks exactly on this point and that the supporters of an increase in expertise can, above all, be found with ORs which think of themselves as lacking on this point. For the rest, the ORs have certainly not only an extension of their legal competencies in mind with the competencies option. More, c.q. better agreements on training between the social partners in a CAO context equally offers, according to the ORs, a possibility to realize this option.

In the FORCE study we have just discussed in particular, works councils from the private sector were involved. Earlier, we also did some research into the involvement of ORs in the training policy in non-profit institutions, particularly civil services (De Vries and Warmerdam, 1990). This research, in which the involvement of works councils was examined by means of case studies demonstrates that works councils in the public sector are not very active in the field of training. Although a number of services with a very high training participation were concerned, the ORs in these services appeared to be involved in training activities in only a limited way. It also appeared from this research that ORs do not often discuss training as separate theme, but usually do this in the context of other policy matters, which take priority at a certain moment, for instance within the framework of decision-making about reorganisation and within that of the development of plans for the relief of the social consequences of mergers, hiving off of branches of companies and cuts in personnel. In those cases there was usually close cooperation between the OR and the trade unions.

Reviewing these data, we can state that the works councils hold a strong position in enterprises indeed, but so far make only limited use of their possibilities to influence training policy. Works councils have not yet been able to develop themselves into full-fledged parties to a discussion with the enterprises management. In that sense their function as a mechanism of transmission between sector and enterprises does not yet stand out clearly enough.

### 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused on the problems of implementation of training policies at firm level. Research and practice, particularly in Belgium and The Netherlands, indicate that sectors often meet serious problems with the transmission of sectoral initiatives to the level of the companies. Sectoral agencies are aware of this problem and have developed several instruments to cope with it: instruments to activate companies and employees to use training provisions and instruments to move training provisions closer to the companies. In addition, we have discussed the role of works councils in the process of translation of sectoral agreements to the concrete situation in the companies. Research from The Netherlands and Germany reveals that this role is still underdeveloped, although the works councils in these countries possess powerful legal rights to act as a speaking partner of management regarding in-company training policy development.

# 7. The role of sub- and cross-sectoral institutions

After having discussed the problem of implementation from a sectoral point of view, we now focus on additional institutions on the sub-sectoral and cross-sectoral level. Three types of institution will be highlighted: company networks, professional associations and regional-sectoral partnerships. If elaborated well, these institutions can also play a role in the implementation of sectoral training policies. Besides, they may compensate for some of the deficiencies of sectoral training policies described in the previous chapters.

## 7.1 Need for sub-sectoral and cross-sectoral institutions?

In our view, there are three main reasons why it is necessary to search for additional institutions.

The first reason has to do with the problems of formation of sectoral training initiatives, connected with the on-going processes of sectoral structuring and restructuring. It has already been said that the sector structure is always in motion and that, consequently, there is a continuous dynamism of sectoral formation and reformation. Sectoral borders become blurred, sectors disappear and other sectors take their place. The same applies to the structure of occupations; at present, a continuous process of occupation shaping and reshaping is taking place. This dynamism may imply that - temporarily - it is not clear to which sector or to which collective employment regulations a company or an occupation belongs, so that at the same time it may be unclear which collective training agreements apply to these occupations and companies. Other institutions, then, have to provide the necessary stimuli for training.

The second reason has to do with the problems of implementation of sectoral training agreements on firm level, in particular in SMEs. In the last paragraph we illustrated that in the somewhat bigger companies the works council can play a role in translating sectoral training agreements into tailor-made arrangements at company level. SMEs, however, do not generally have a works council. Besides, as we have earlier noticed, it is rather difficult to activate small entrepreneurs from the level of the sector, i.e. from anonymous institutions which in their view operate far behind and have no real economic meaning for their direct businesses. So, we

have to look for additional channels and policies to stimulate small entrepreneurs, which are closer to them and fit better with the daily practices in their companies. We would support this option, though we recognize that it is not an easy one. But in our view a training policy which only aims at the level of the sector is not sufficiently effective as it comes to the stimulation of actual participation in training, certainly not in small businesses. Additional institutions are needed, institutions which can provide for a better transmission of sectoral agreements and initiatives to the level of individual firms.

The third reason has to do with the inherent risks of sectoral policies of being focused too much on specific qualifications and core categories of companies and workers, at the cost of broader applicable skills and groups of companies and workers with a weaker position on the market. As we have argued earlier, agencies representing more general interests should play a corrective role regarding these risks. Transmission of sectoral initiatives should not only improve training in the stronger subsegments, but also and perhaps even more so, in the weaker subsegments of the sector.

In the Dutch report, which is based on an analysis of several detailed studies of sectoral training initiatives (Geurts, 1989; Hövels, Geurts & Van Wel, 1989; De Vries, 1990; De Vries & Hövels, 1991; Van den Tillaart, 1993; Warmerdam, 1993; Van der Krogt & Warmerdam, 1993; Van den Tillaart et al, 1994) three types of institutions emerge which can play an important role in the transmission from the sectoral level to the level of the companies and the employees:

- company networks; these institutions are developed within the relationships between employers and their environments; they play an important role in small and medium-sized firms;
- professional associations; these are developed within the relations between professional employees and their professional colleagues, both inside and outside the organizations where they are employed; such associations play an important role in many (non-profit) service sectors.
- regional-sectoral platforms; these are developed within the relations between sectoral agencies, whether companies, branch organizations or joint bodies, and agencies in the sectors environment, in particular regional and local authorities and regional employment and labour market agencies.

The role of regional-sectoral platforms, i.e. partnerships within the framework of a sector´s regional policy or a region´s sectoral policy, is also stressed by the Belgian and French reports. The Greek report mentions them in some instances, but does not elaborate on them. The German report does not mention them explicitly, but it is evident that the topic is also relevant for the German case, because of the strong regional orientation of the German system of vocational education. The other institutions, company networks and professional associations, get less attention in the reports from the other countries.

In the next paragraphs we shall elaborate the role of these three institutions in the field of training. In particular, we will discuss the relationship between their role and that of the social partners. The elaboration in paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3 is mainly derived from the Dutch report. Paragraph 8.3 is based on information from the Dutch, Belgian and French report.

### 7.2 The role of company networks

The sector studies, recently conducted in The Netherlands for the FORCE programme involved both the sectoral level and the level of the firm. In these studies the relevance of company networks for training of employees has clearly been demonstrated. Company networks can be defined as associations of firms with a more or less solid and a more or less durable character. Such networks are based on shared interests, but their common basis can be different. Networks can be developed within an industrial column, within a product chain or around a specific technology. The sector studies in the retail trade and the car repair sector (Van den Tillaart, 1993; Warmerdam, 1993) revealed that such networks can provide a relevant basis for an effective organization of training. Typical characteristics of this training within networks are that it is strongly embedded within the commercial relationships between the company and its environment and that it takes (problems in) the primary processes within the company as its direct point of intervention. These two characteristics give the training a high potential economic value. To illustrate this point and to demonstrate how training on network level can be put in practice, we shall discuss in detail the situation in the car repair sector (Warmerdam, 1993).

In the Dutch car repair sector, specific systems of training provisions have been created on the level of company networks. Meant here are the training provisions of the car importers. Importers play a very important role in the Dutch motor vehicle industry. For new car sales, The Netherlands has a system of selective distribution, with the distribution of cars through importers' national sales networks. Each importer signs contracts with a dealer network, giving the dealers the exclusive rights to sell a make of car within a specified area. The dealer contracts, which are renewed each year, contain all kinds of agreements concerning the number of cars to be sold, stocks to be held, warranty agreements, sales and marketing, etc. In many cases they also include agreements on training. Most importers have their own training centres. In general, these training centres are well equipped. They have access to the latest technology and equipment, as well as modern teaching aids, such as interactive video, simulators and opened out models, which are often supplied directly by the manufacturer. The centres employ their own training staff. Usually there are specialized trainers for technical, commercial and management courses.

Anticipating or reacting to the 'electronics boom' in the mid-eighties, Dutch car importers have renewed and extended their training supply substantially. Most importers started with a basic programme in electronics and developed in addition specific courses for new electronic systems which were introduced within their makes of car. At the moment, the training centres of most importers offer a broad spectrum of make-specific and make-dependent courses:

- basic technical courses: courses which help mechanics to become familiar with the specific technology of the importer's cars;
- specialist technical courses, aimed at experienced mechanics who can and wish to advance to the level of technical specialist or even high-tech specialist;
- courses which focus on new products and models: short courses to update dealer staff on new technology introduced in new car models;
- commercial courses, aimed at the dealer's car salesmen;
- management courses: on the one hand courses which focus on marketing and company management and on the other hand courses aimed at strengthening ties with the make and the importer.

The technical training courses make up the major part of this package. According to the INNOVAM, the public training centre, the training centres of the importers account for the majority of in-service training efforts. It is estimated that each year up to 80 percent of all training days spent in the branch, is spent for courses in these private institutes.

The importers' courses are open only to employers and employees of the affiliated dealer businesses. Training arrangements are set out every year in the contract between the dealer and the importer: the dealer contract. The arrangements made, the way in which the training is organized, and the degree of obligation differ from importer to importer. Some importers impose fairly stringent obligations on their dealers. They draw up a sort of 'training schedule' for their dealer network, and indicate themselves which mechanics must follow which courses; the dealers are bound by this programme. For other importers the arrangements have a less compulsory character. They draw up a programme every year and inform the dealers of this, but then leave the dealers free to determine for themselves which employees go to which courses, and when; however, the importers ensure fair selection procedures. Of the three companies we looked at, the arrangements at the FORD company were the most liberal ones. The training centre just offers its courses, dealers have a free choice in appointing mechanics to participate in them. In the training institute of GM/OPEL the dealers are also free to appoint mechanics, but the training institute itself has a detailed registration and planning system. Once employees are unregistered in this system, they automatically get a call from the institute if they have to follow sequential courses within the programme line they were appointed for. The BMW company has the most compulsory arrangements. Dealers of BMW are free to choose the courses for which they appoint mechanics, but each dealer is obliged to send each employee to the training centre for a specified minimum number of days per year. If he does not reach this minimum level, he risks losing a financial bonus he can get at the end of the year. These three importers carefully take account of which employees have followed which courses. Courses completed are unregistered in a 'training passport' with an official signature of the importer. Employees can show this as a curriculum of their 'training career', if they want to apply for other jobs on the internal or external labour market.

A very important role in the training networks is played by the liaisons between the importers' training centre and the dealer businesses. Such liaisons are for instance

regional managers, service inspectors and help-desk employees of the importers. These intermediates fulfil several functions in the training network:

- promotion of new courses in dealer businesses;
- controlling the participation of dealer staff;
- stimulation of dealers staying behind;
- counselling of dealers concerning training problems and plans;
- monitoring of implementation of training in the businesses;
- fostering transfer of training in the businesses;
- evaluating courses together with dealers and dealer staff;
- signalling shortcomings in the courses offered;
- signalling new training needs in the dealer businesses.

For many small dealers the existence of intermediates is an extra stimulating factor. The intermediates are specialists in make-specific knowledge, which is of direct interest to the dealers. They operate at a much closer distance than, for instance, the representatives of the official branch organizations. They are trusted persons and they are familiar with the businesses and staff of the dealers. On the basis of this direct commercial relationship they can easily stimulate training efforts among the dealers and their staff. It is partly thanks to these intermediates that the importers' training centres have become important provisions, acting with great influence on the businesses in their dealer networks.

So much for the case of the motor vehicle repair trade, which describes examples of training networks on the level of an industrial column. However, such types of training within company networks not only exist in the car repair trade. We find them also in other branches. For instance in the retail trade, within the relationships between a wholesale company and retail stores (Van den Tillaart, 1993), in the metal industry, within the networks of assembly plants and supply companies (Hövels, Geurts & Van Well, 1989), in the printing industry, in the relationships between publishing companies and printing businesses (Hövels & Van den Berg, 1992), in the sector of food and beverages, within the relationships between food manufacturers and food distributors (King & Kruse, 1995), and in the computer service sector, in the relationships between software houses and user organizations (Riesewijk & Warmerdam, 1988). So far, only little research has been done in this field, and information on the existence of company networks is scarce. But both political and scientific interest in the phenomenon is growing and we can expect to

get more data in the short term. In The Netherlands, research already done predominantly concentrates on the economic aspects of network building. It is only recently that some research has been started which focuses on training aspects of company networks. This research is mainly inspired by the current discussion on the role of expertise networks and expertise management in the process of industrial innovation.

The example of the car repair sector clearly demonstrates that the training networks within this branch contain many elements which can also be found in sectoral training systems. There are training centres, training regulations, training programmes for different target groups, training trajectories, instruments for training needs assessment and quality control, and there is also a sort of certification system, with certificates only recognized by the branch, not by the government. However, typical for these networks is in particular the fact that training activities are strongly connected with the production processes in the companies. Training and learning are separately organized activities, but they are also embedded within the commercial relations and transactions of the company and have their points of intervention within the activities which also are the daily concern of employer and employees: production and the problems in the primary production processes. This embodiment within the production system gives the training a high potential economic value, but it also brings with it some extra risks. Learning activities easily can be pushed away by production priorities. Learning programmes run the risk of being too specific, following too rigidly the specific content and structure of the work processes. Company interests and interests of employees easily can come into conflict with one another. To overcome these risks adequate connections should be established between the training activities within the networks and the broader, more formalized, less company-bound training activities off the job (Kraayvanger et al, 1995).

This last point raises an interesting question for policy and research, i.e. what relationships can be established between the social partners and the actors in the company networks? It is not possible to transfer the social dialogue from the sectoral to the network level without any problems, because sectors and networks do not cover the same domains. Normally, sectors contain more companies than those which are organized in networks, and networks often contain companies from more than one sector; in organizing themselves they usually cross existing sectoral borders. Furthermore, company networks are one-sidedly dominated by the

(organized) employers; they do not have any institutions for the expression of interests of the (organized) employees. This is also an impediment to a Social Dialogue on network level. However, some coordination of activities does seem possible, if at least adequate connections can be established between training provisions on sectoral, network and company level. The social partners could play an important role in this regard, especially through their agreements in sectoral collective bargaining and through their influence in the sectoral training funds. In the car repair sector, for example, the importers' training centres for a long time operated fully apart from the public training centres. But recently, the official branch training centre, has developed a new training policy, which redefines the position and tasks of the various training institutions in relation to the innovation processes in the sector and which formulates agreements on linking the provision of the in-service training of the importers' training centres, the apprenticeship system, and the schools for public vocational education. Importers will take over training for new technology for specific makes during the innovation introduction stage. When a new technology is introduced on a broader scale, they are included in training provided by the apprenticeship system. At an even later stage, when the new technology has become part of basic motor vehicle technology, it will be included in regular technical education. In this way, technical innovations will gradually be included in the sector's training provisions for vocational qualifications. We think, it could be very relevant to evaluate the feasibility of these types of constructions in other sectors too.

### 7.3 The role of professional associations

Besides company networks, in many branches of the non-profit sector there are also other institutions which can play an important role in the implementation of training policies at company and employee level, i.e. the professional associations, the more or less solid and durable collaborations of professionals who are working in a certain professional domain. In Holland especially Mok (1973), Geurts (1989, and Van der Krogt (1995) have pointed out their significance. In Germany, the debates on the reprofessionalization of work (Schumann et al, 1994) provide interesting arguments for a further elaboration of their role.

The best organized professional associations can be found in the classic professional domains, such as the medical disciplines, law and architecture. But

they are also developing in modern professional sectors, such as automation and consultancy services, and in sectors with many semi-professional organizations, like education, health care and welfare work. These professional or occupational associations (we will use the terms as synonyms), especially the well-organized ones, have several important functions: definition of the professional domain, regulation of entry into the profession, guarding professional practice, monitoring the quality of services, and improving the further development of the profession. In order to fulfil these functions adequately, they are also closely involved in questions concerning the qualification of professional practitioners. But professional associations can differ strongly with respect to their degree of organization. Besides the old, classic, solidly-organized associations, based on prescribed membership, there are many loose, often temporary, associations, which are organized on a voluntary basis around specific initiatives or specific types of activities. It seems that these loose, informal associations often operate apart from the regular circuits of professional education. However, hardly any empirical research has been done on the functioning of these types of associations. Only very little is known about the degree to which they are involved in education and training.

The important role of professional associations in training and qualification development can be illustrated by an example from a professional service field, where we did research some years ago, i.e. the field of rehabilitation and resettlement of discharged prisoners (Van der Krogt & Warmerdam, 1993 and 1994). This field is one of the sectors of Dutch welfare work. The sector is governed on a national level, but the services are carried out within a network of regional institutions. Each regional institution is composed of a number of teams of probation officers for intramural and extramural aid. Within the sector we found several kinds of professional associations which are important for training. In many regions local collaborations are built, groups of probation officers of different teams and subdisciplines, who come together for regular meetings to develop their qualifications by way of mutual consultation. Most institutions frequently organize study meetings and workshops, where their own employees and employees of other institutes can exchange experiences and discuss new developments, e.g. new types of problems (incest crimes, alcohol addiction), new types of services (alternative sanctions, work projects for prisoners), or new organization procedures (automation, policy planning). Frequently, the institutions start up formal work groups or project groups with the task of assembling and developing new knowledge and insights on new types of problems, target groups, aid services and therapy methods.

Usually, some external specialists participate in these groups, mainly specialists from universities with whom the newest insights on a certain type of problem or therapy can be exchanged. Sometimes these project and study groups are organized on a wider, even a national level. They then often also cover affiliated professional domains, like psychiatry or youth protection services. Professionals in these domains who work on the same problems or treat the same target groups can join the associations. In all these associations the participants develop their qualifications and, at the same time, gather and develop new professional knowledge. In the next step, this knowledge is then transferred to their (non-participating) colleagues in their home institutions. In this way, professional innovations are gradually included in the services of the individual institutions, teams and workers.

Within these professional associations training activities, or better: learning activities, are often organized in a different way from those within formalized training programmes. Trainers and other training experts often play a less important role. The probation officers themselves are primarily responsible for their own expertise enhancement. For the most part, they organize their learning activities themselves. It is largely they who identify learning needs, formulate their own learning objectives, draw up their own learning plans, select and organize their own learning situations to suit their needs, monitor their learning process, and assume responsibility for the application of what they have learned in their own work practice. For the most part they also decide when and for which objectives they call in outside help, for instance in the form of a training course at a regular training institute. For the probation officers, the training course supply of the professional educational institutions is just one of the sources from which they can draw new knowledge. Equally or even more important is the input they can get from their professional 'learning associations'.

This example from the rehabilitation services leads to three conclusions. First, professional associations do play an important role in the transmission of new professional knowledge from the 'research centres' to professional practice in the institutions in the field. Second, sometimes those professional associations have a formal organization, but often they have an informal or semiformal character. Third, the regular institutes for professional education are hardly involved in the initiatives for expertise enhancement. The first two conclusions seem to hold not only for the rehabilitation services but also for many other professional service sectors. For the third conclusion, this seems not to be the case. The involvement

of regular educational institutes in expertise enhancement seems to vary, depending on the degree of institutionalization of the professions concerned (Van der Krogt, 1995). The rehabilitation service is a profession with a limited degree of institutionalization. There are no educational institutions and formalized professional associations which can act with force as recognizable representatives of the field. That is a situation which is totally different from that in the classical professions. These professions have a clearly defined professional domain, a robust body of knowledge, a specific educational infrastructure, a well-organized professional association, a broadly accepted professional code, and a professional title which is protected by law. In these professions the educational institutes have a more important position with regard to the qualification of new practitioners, expertise enhancement, continuous training, quality monitoring and professional innovation. In most cases, these educational institutes are closely affiliated with (powerful) professional associations. One of their main tasks is to uphold the standards of professional services. They can do this in particular by keeping up the qualifications of the professional practitioners.

The degree of institutionalization of a profession also seems an important factor with regard to the relationships between professional associations and the social partners, i.e. the organizations of employers and employees. De Vries (1989) among others points this out as a result of a study he conducted in the health and care sector, a sector with a great variety of professional and semi-professional occupations. In our view, roughly speaking, three types of professions can be distinguished. In each of these types the social partners and the professional associations have a different relationship with each other.

The first category are the *classical professions*, like the medical and legal professions. Here, the professional associations are the dominant actors. The social partners - organized employers and employees - are nearly absent or play a subordinate role, due to the fact that many professionals in these sectors are not salaried workers but self-employed persons. The professional associations have a lot of influence in the institutes for professional education, in continuing vocational training and in efforts aimed at expertise enhancement of practitioners. They often apply rigorous criteria for admission to further education and training and stipulate strict conditions concerning the quality of professional practice, often within the framework of a formalized system of certificates and sanctions. In doing so, they dominate professional work (Van der Krogt, 1995).

A second category is the *semi-professional occupational groups*. Most of these can be found in service institutions, both profit and non-profit, and among the salaried professional classes. Good examples are sectors like health care, education, welfare work and commercial services. In these semi-professional domains there often exist well equipped organizations of employers and employees alongside more or less powerful professional associations. In general however, the professional associations and the social partners operate in separate circuits. The associations primarily concentrate on issues concerning the substance and standards of professional work, the social partners focus on issues concerning the conditions and circumstances of employment. However, in some fields issues of work content and terms of employment are strongly intertwined, for instance in the field of job evaluation and career development, and it is especially in these fields that relationships between both actors come into existence. Often, these are complicated and strained relationships, due to a divergence of interests. And often tensions are hard to avoid, as is proven by recent experiences in the Dutch teaching profession. In this sector the social partners jointly try to define a new more differentiated structure of teacher functions, in order to create easier job entrances and longer career ladders. But these efforts are contested by the professional associations of the teachers, who consider this differentiation as an erosion and 'industrialization' of their profession (Vrieze et al, 1994). The field of vocational education and training is also a field on which complex relationships can develop between the two actors, in particular in situations where education and training has to respond to rapid new developments in professional work. Government policies aimed at a greater involvement of the social partners in vocational education have stimulated this. But, as we have seen, besides the institutes for vocational education also the informal 'learning' associations play an important role for expertise enhancement in semi-professional sectors (cf. the rehabilitation sector). In general, these associations have no links at all with the social partners. Often, they also are only loosely coupled to the formal educational infrastructure.

A third category is the *industrial occupational groups*. In these sectors or trades professional associations are nearly absent, but there are well established institutes for vocational education and training who play an important role. In these sectors, the social partners are the dominant actors. Often, they have a powerful influence on both the terms of employment and on the content of jobs (types of jobs, levels of jobs), and, connected with this, on the content of training programmes for the

jobs. They are often closely involved in the sectoral centres for vocational education and training. In paragraph 5 this was illustrated in some branches of industry. A difficult point for the social partners in these sectors is the fact that the borderlines of the social dialogue often do not overlap with those between occupations. Furthermore, the borderlines between occupations are continuously shifting under the influence of technological and organizational changes. In fact, the categorizing and structuring of occupations in itself is continuously at stake in the interplay of forces between the actors involved (Mok, 1973).

Until now, hardly any empirical research has been done on the relationships between social partners and (formal and informal) professional associations, certainly not in the profit sector c.q. in the different branches of the industry. The concept of 'profession' has always primarily been associated with the service sector, especially with branches of higher qualified services in the non-profit sector. However, the discussion on the 'professionalization of the workforce' demonstrates that the concept becomes increasingly relevant for the industrial trades (Schumann et al, 1994). In The Netherlands, especially Geurts (1989 and 1995) calls for a revaluation of an occupation theoretical view of the connection between education and employment. In his view, a structuring of vocational education and training and of the relations of the actors involved along the lines of occupations could give a new impulse to craftsmanship and professionalism in sectors, where these are threatened by erosion due to changes in technology and organization. According to Geurts, the institutes for vocational education and training could play an initiating role in this process. In our view, the associations of the professionals themselves, whether or not connected with the training institutes, could play such a stimulating role as well.

### 7.4 The role of regional-sectoral platforms

The third type of institution we want to discuss are the regional-sectoral platforms. These are joint bodies of representatives of sectoral and regional agencies involved in training, which are mostly organized with the objective of mutual consultation, adjustment of activities and development of special regional-sectoral initiatives in the field of training. Often, stimulation of training is not their only objective. Training activities may be embedded in a broader strategy of regional socio-economical development. The relevance of such regional-sectoral initiatives is particularly stressed in the reports from Belgium, France and The Netherlands.

The main actors involved in regional-sectoral platforms are in most cases both agencies from the private and the public domain: representatives of employers' associations, trade unions, joint sectoral training agencies, come together with representatives from local and regional governmental authorities, public employment exchange agencies and, often, representatives from public regional economic support services, such as the chambers of commerce and regional development funds. Sometimes, representatives of the public institutes of vocational education may also be present. Most regional-sectoral platforms can be considered as public-private partnerships. As such they can facilitate adjustment and eventually integration of training policies, programmes, resources, facilities, etc. developed by the private and public domain.

Private sectoral agencies have several interests in participating in the platforms. They can give them a foothold in the region, they can facilitate contacts with the business community in the region, they can provide valuable information for the adaption of training programmes to the specific circumstances (company needs, target groups) in the region and, thus, they can stimulate the implementation of sectoral training policies in the companies within the region. We have discussed this point in the previous chapter. A second advantage for the sectoral agencies is that, through participating in regional platforms, they can get easier access to resources for training available in other circuits, e.g. the funds of the employment service, regional development funds of the communities or funds of the EU like ESF and EFRD. A third advantage is that the platforms can facilitate the establishment of relationships between sectoral training agencies and other training agencies working in the region, e.g. schools for initial vocational education or institutes for adult education. Cooperation with these institutes in adjusting training programmes, developing training material, exchanging information, etc. will then become easier.

However, the initiative to develop a platform may also originate from the public side. In Belgium and the Netherlands, especially from the side of the public employment agencies there is a growing interest in establishing cooperative agreements with sectoral agencies. In both countries special policies have recently been developed by the central bureaus of the public Employment Service to stimulate agreements with sectoral bodies. In The Netherlands for example agreements have already been made between the public Employment Service and sectoral agencies in the agricultural sector, the building industry, the transport

sector, the catering services sector, the health and care sector and the sector of education. The agreements not only cover training, but also a broad range of other issues in the field of employment and labour market policy. With regard to training, usually general joint policy objectives are defined, procedures for information and consultation are elaborated, target groups are described and appointments about allocation of resources are made. The agreements cover of course the activities to get unemployed persons to work in the sector, but usually they also contain agreements about training and retraining for employees, especially persons working in the sector who are threatened with loss of job or dismissal because of reorganization or economic restructuring. Training activities can be provided in isolation or within longer trajectories, where they are connected with measures like outplacement, in-company and cross-company replacement and pooling of labour force. The agreements are concluded on the national level, between the central bureau of the Employment Service and the central representatives of the sector. But they must be implemented and further elaborated on the regional level by the regional agencies involved. These can adapt them to the specific circumstances in their region. Like in The Netherlands, this process is also well underway in Belgium.

In France, the decentralization of training policy got strong impulses from the introduction of the opportunity for regional and local authorities to conclude training agreements with the companies in their region (contrats d'objectifs). The major objective of this measure was to give the regions an instrument for training planning, with which they could adapt provisions and programmes better to the specific regional circumstances regarding the socio-economic profile, target groups for training, qualification requirements in companies, possibilities of existing training supply, etc. In many regions branch organizations became involved as representatives of the companies towards the local authorities. Regional platforms were established to negotiate training plans which could do justice to both the interest of the communities and the companies/sectors. In this way, the communities got better guarantees of an adequate adjustment of their activities for adult learners, groups at risk, etc. to the actual needs of companies in the environment, while the companies got better chances of being served with adequately qualified personnel on the local labour market. The French report describes some experiences with regional policies in the building and metal working industry. But, in most sectors, as it states, regional initiatives are only in their infancy. An important problem which sometimes arises is that a branch has difficulties with a decentralization policy itself.

In summary, we can say that two trends of decentralization of training policy, which are visible in both Belgium and The Netherlands and in France, come together in the platforms described above: decentralization along sectoral and decentralization along regional lines. We can agree with the expectation, stated in the French report, that in the years to come the region will become increasingly important as a space where training activities deployed by a variety of agencies and directed towards a variety of target groups have to be coordinated.

### 7.5 Conclusion

In this paragraph we have argued that sectoral training initiatives, because of the formation and implementation problems which we discussed in the previous chapters, should be connected and completed with training initiatives at sub-sectoral and cross-sectoral levels. Three such types of initiatives or institutions have been highlighted: company networks, professional associations and regional-sectoral platforms. In our view, sectoral training initiatives are important links in the chain of provisions which connects the education and the employment system. The institutions described can strengthen these links, by making them more flexible and by compensating for some of their deficiencies.

# 8. Elaboration of a conceptual frame of reference

In this final chapter we present the result of the methodological part of our country comparing analysis: a conceptual model for the analysis of sectoral training systems. The need for such a model became apparent, when we were studying the national reports and saw the large variety of situations, practices and arguments in the different countries. The main function of this model is to provide a frame of reference for a systematic synthesis of the information and arguments discussed in the previous chapters. In the following paragraphs we describe this frame of reference and its basic elements.

## 8.1 Unfolding of sectoral training systems

The last step we made in synthesizing the information of the national reports was the elaboration of a conceptual model for the analysis of sectoral training systems. This model had to meet several requirements. It had to be general and flexible enough to do justice to the large variety of situations reported from the different countries and sectors. It had to provide a set of concepts which could be used to describe and analyze the basic aspects of sectoral training systems in a coherent way. It had to take account of the historical and socio-political dimensions of sectoral training systems. And it had to provide a framework in which actual issues and practical bottlenecks in the functioning of sectoral training could be discussed in a systematic way.

The model we have elaborated is presented in figure 1. With this model the coming into existence of sectoral institutions as a separate level for the organization of training can be conceptualized as a *process of dynamic system development*, unfolding in time through joint actions of sectoral agencies, taking place within a specific social and economical environment. This development process can also be conceived of as a *learning process*, because one can presume that sectoral agencies, once they have been established, encounter different types of problems while negotiating, developing and implementing sectoral training policies. They will reflect on these problems, try to find solutions for them, apply the solutions in practice and learn from the experiences thus gained. In the course of this process they may modify the original arrangements.



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The elaborated model is not a replication 'in theory' of actual developments 'in practice'. First and foremost, it is an analytical tool, a heuristic device for describing and systematizing what is going on in different sectors and countries with respect to the organization of training on sectoral levels. The model is an evolutionary model, so it can be used to describe the historical development of sectoral training systems. It is also an ideal typical model, i.e. it "catches" historical developments not in their full real complexity, but in a more abstract, typological sense. This enhances its value as a methodological device for comparative descriptions and analyses. With the help of the model systematic descriptions can be made, both on the level of countries (e.g. Belgium compared with Germany) as on the level of sectors (e.g. the sector of electronics compared with the sector of food and beverages).

We have to stress that, primarily, the model has a descriptive function, not a prescriptive one: *it is a model of, not a model for reality*. It has no normative pretentions in the sense that it gives recommendations on what paths to follow in order to get effective training on sectoral levels. However, the model can be used to structure policy discussions, to develop policy visions and scenarios and to identify points of actions for training policy makers. In particular, an assessment of problems encountered and solutions found by the actors involved in the different stages of the evolutionary process can give relevant clues for the development of training policy. The type of analysis then to be made is an analysis in terms of 'functional alternatives'. The assumption of such an analysis is that in the course of the development process there occur some general problems, every sector has to cope with. These problems, however, can be dealt with in specific manners, depending on the actual contingencies and requirements of the situation. From an assessment of the alternative solutions found in practice (success and failure factors, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, limitations, transfer possibilities, etc.) one then can derive recommendations for further policy development. But, to stress once again, such a policy exercise is not intended by this study.

In the following paragraphs we will discuss in detail the different aspects of the model: the basic *elements* of sectoral training systems; the basic *processes* in the development of sectoral training systems; the relations between sectoral training systems and their *environment*; sectoral training systems and the *Social Dialogue*; and the *segments* of sectoral training systems.

## 8.2 Basic elements of sectoral training systems

There are four basic elements in sectoral training systems, indicated in the boxes of the model:

- ❑ sectoral (training) agencies and bodies
- ❑ training agreements between (sectoral) agencies
- ❑ sectoral training policies and provisions
- ❑ training activities on the level of the firms

*Sectoral agencies and bodies*

First of all there are the *actors* who occupy themselves with training activities in the sector. These can be agencies within the sector itself, like employers and employees, employers' associations and trade unions, institutes for vocational education and sectoral training funds. But they can also be agencies from outside the sector, who at a certain moment operate within the sector and who thus act as agencies practically influencing the activities within the sectoral training system; their home bases, however, remain in the environment. Agencies of this kind are e.g. national, regional and local authorities, employers' associations and trade unions of other sectors, associations of supplier firms, controlling and certifying institutions, etc.

Besides, agencies can establish relationships and alliances with other agencies within and outside the sector, so that all sorts of training networks come into being, like bodies for negotiation, consultation, cooperation and coordination of activities. Well known examples of such institutions are for instance sectoral committees or platforms for the improvement of the relationships between education and industry.

The agencies involved may be agencies which have training as their sole task, e.g. training institutes and training funds. But this will not always be the case. It may also concern agencies, which define their main activity in another domain (e.g. trade unions), but which, besides this, also play a major role in the field of training.

*Training agreements*

The second element is the *training agreements* between the actors involved. Such agreements can have different forms, varying from loose, voluntary declarations to cooperate (e.g. a training institute with a number of companies) to formal, compulsory, legalized and sanctioned sets of rules and regulations with respect to training (e.g. in a collective labour contract). Where it concerns the actors, training agreements will usually fall in either one of the following categories:

- agreements between (large) companies within the framework of an employers' association;
- agreements between different employers' associations;
- agreements between the social partners, i.e. one or more employers' associations with one or more trade unions working in the sector;
- agreements between national government and social partners representing a sector (employers' associations, trade unions, joint bodies);
- agreements between regional/local public authorities and employers' associations, social partners and/or joint bodies;
- agreements between training institutes and sectoral agencies and bodies.

The study of Blanpain et al (1994) on contractual policies concerning continuing training in the EU Member States demonstrates that training agreements can cover a broad range of subjects. Important issues are usually the financing of training (e.g. subventions, training funds), the types of training to be financed, the establishment and administration of a training institute, the provision of training rights and facilities for employees (days off for training, reimbursement of training costs), access to training of specific target groups, special measures for risk groups, like youngsters, migrant workers or elderly workers. Agreements can regulate these issues in a very global sense, they may also contain very detailed prescriptions on these points. The agreements made on training may have a rather isolated state within e.g. a collective labour contract, they also can be closely connected with other agreements, e.g. those on vocational education, employment or social insurance policies.

*Policies and provisions*

If the agencies and (joint) bodies in a sector adjust to each other in one way or another and if they together undertake coordinated actions in one form or another on the sectoral level, we can speak of sectoral *training policies*. Such policies can be more or less crystallized, formalized and legitimized and can, of course, take different substantial themes and problems as their main points of reference. Besides more or less explicit statements on intentions and targets, within the frame of such policies usually some essential *provisions* for a sectoral training infrastructure are developed:

- Important provisions are the financial provisions for training activities in the sector. Sectors may develop specific arrangements on this point. Some sectors e.g. have established special *training funds*, filled with charges, imposed on the constituting companies and administered by a joint body of the social partners representing the sector. Means from other resources, e.g. subventions of local authorities, national government and European programmes may be added to these funds.

- Partly, these funds may be used to finance special *training institutes* for the sector. This can be newly established institutes, but also institutes who traditionally already play an important role in the provision of qualified employees for the sector e.g. the institutes for vocational education within the framework of the apprenticeship system.

- The institutes may develop a *training supply* in the form of training courses, programmes and projects, which they can offer to the employers and employees working in their sector. The institutes may exploit their own training centre, contract their own staff of trainers, develop their own training plans for the sector and initiate and coordinate all kinds of special projects. They may also represent the sector as an interlocuteur for governmental authorities.

- The institutes may also develop some form of *planning of training* for the sector. This may be global, short-term plans, it may also concern plans for the longer term, with detailed goals for different subsectors. Usually, plans will be based on some form of research or observation of trends.

Besides these provisions, also more concrete policy measures are part of a sector's training policies. Of course, there can be measures of all kinds, corresponding to the variety of targets and themes the policies are aimed at. But, in general, two sorts of measures will be of special importance, i.e. measures for training policy implementation and measures for the adaption of training policies. We will elaborate these further in the next paragraph.

*Activities in enterprises*

The final element of sectoral training systems is indicated in the last box of the model. These are the *training activities* in the enterprises, which constitute the sector. These activities can appear in different forms. Most important is, of course, the actual participation of employees in training courses, as indicated by e.g. the number or rate of employees trained in a certain period of time, the (average) number of days spend for training, the (average) amount of money spent on training. One can break down such figures still further by looking at certain subgroups among the employees, like management, production staff, clerical workers, etc. Another type of activity is (in-company) courses or projects organized for specific categories of employees, e.g. younger workers, migrant workers, lower qualified workers, older employees, employees threatened with unemployment, etc. A third type of activity concerns the development of training plans and provisions at the firm level itself. Activities like training needs analysis, planning and budgeting of training, evaluation of training courses and stimulation of transfer of training fall under this category. Research in several European countries has revealed big differences between sectors with respect to these indicators.

### 8.3 Basic processes in the development of sectoral training systems

The basic elements of sectoral training systems result from a number of processes. According to the model, there are four basic processes, which define the evolution of sectoral training systems. These processes are indicated along the upper arrows between the boxes. They involve:

- the articulation of sectoral training agencies and bodies;
- the negotiation of sectoral training agreements;
- the creation of sectoral training policies and provisions;
- the implementation of training activities on firm level.

Each of these processes has its counterpart, indicated at the lower side of the model. These "counter-processes" of respectively adaption, revision, reconstruction and reformation provide for a continuous feedback. This gives the system as a whole a certain degree of flexibility in its relationships with the environment.

*The starting point: a diffuse system*

The starting point of the process is what we have called a *diffuse system* of continuing training. The term 'diffuse' refers to a whole of dispersed training activities, carried out by a multitude of agencies (individual companies, local authorities, public schools, private training institutes, etc.), initiated for specific occasions and mostly set up on a temporary, incidental, ad hoc basis. There are no durable relationships between agencies; coordination seldom takes place. Activities are organized in an incoherent and often intransparant way. In fact, one can ask if there is a training "system" at all.

We must stress at this point that this lack of a system of continuing training does not say anything about the coherence of the system of initial vocational education. With regard to initial training a whole range of possibilities remains open. On the one hand one can imagine sectors where there is not only no continuous training but also no coherent system of initial vocational training; in particular, this may be the case in countries with a short tradition in vocational education. On the other hand one can imagine sectors where there exists a highly developed and differentiated system of initial vocational education, but where there is still a lack of coherence in the provisions for continuing training; perhaps we may expect this in particular in countries with a long tradition in vocational education. Between these extremes, of course, many other situations are conceivable. For this reason, in studies of specific sectors the relationships between the systems and arrangements for initial vocational training and those for continuing training deserve special attention.

*Articulation*

The first process, or perhaps stage, in the development of sectoral training systems concerns the *articulation* of sectoral training agencies and bodies. In the course of this process the sector distinguishes itself as a separate level for the organization of training activities, besides the level of the state and that of the individual companies. Several 'sub-processes' play a role in this stage of articulation:

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- decentralisation of governmental policies in the field of vocational education and training, so that an autonomous space for decision-making and action by agencies on other levels than the state level can be created; such a playing ground is an essential prerequisite for sectoral training systems coming into being;

- the association of companies and the identification of a certain sector as a distinct domain of common activities for which specific training activities have to be organized;

- the definition of which activities/companies do belong to the sectoral domain and which do not and the demarcation of this specific sectoral domain in relation to the domain of other "nearby" sectors; as already is mentioned earlier, debates on statistics and classifications can be important in this phase;

- the foundation of institutional agencies and bodies, endowed with the authority to represent subgroups within the sector and to function as legitimized partners in consultative bodies with actors from the sector's environment.

In general, the impulses for such an articulation of training systems on the sectoral level can come from three different directions:

- from above: in this case the prime impulses come from a decentralisation process in the field of vocational education and training, set in motion by the state;

- from below: here, the prime impulses result from a process of association of companies who operate in the same field of activity and who have a common interest in cooperation or at least coordination of training efforts;

- from within: in this case, important impulses come from existing institutes for (initial) vocational education; these may result from the need of these institutes to differentiate their existing supply of training, partly externalize it and adjust it to pressures from the demand side of the market: the private companies.

Which impulses are dominant in a certain sector will differ from country to country and from sector to sector and will depend largely on factors in the environment, in particular the characteristics of the legislative system, the system of education and the system of employment. Besides, it is also possible that there is no 'prime mover' and that impulses come from different directions. This may lead to interactions which may strengthen the effects.

Of course, it is possible that the articulation process does not succeed. We may expect, then, that the system will fall back into its diffuse state. But this will probably be an altered state. The failed attempts to establish new institutions will presumably lead to reformations in the original arrangements. This may set the stage for new attempts.

*Negotiation*

When the sector has articulated itself as a separate level for the organization of training activities and when agencies have been established which can represent the different subgroups within the sector, *negotiations* may start in order to define common interests and goals and agree upon the necessary arrangements for the further development of the sector's training policy. Two types of negotiations are important in this phase: negotiations between agencies within the sector and negotiations between sectoral agencies and agencies in the environment.

Firstly, there are the negotiations within the sector. An important type of such negotiations are those between individual companies/employers aimed at establishing a common training policy within the framework of a common organization. Especially in sectors dominated by a few large enterprises a certain degree of consensus between these firms seems to be a necessary condition for training policy on the sectoral level to become further developed. A second type are the negotiations between different employers' or branch organizations in the sector. In particular in sectors with much heterogeneity of products and processes different subgroups or branches may have different interests in training and they have to reach at least a minimum of consensus in order to develop a common sectoral training policy. A third type is the negotiation between employers' and employees' organisations, in particular trade unions. Employers and employees have diverging but also common interests in training. An assessment of these common interests may lead to agreements on e.g. training expenditure, training

regulations and training facilities and to the establishment of joint bodies, like training funds, which may give strong impulses to the development of a sector's training policy. A last type we would like to mention are negotiations between sectoral agencies/joint bodies for continuing training and institutes for initial vocational training which are working in the sector. Particularly in sectors where tne training institutes have an autonomous and dominant position in the educational system, such negotiations strongly influence the development of the system of continuing training.

Not only the negotiations within but also the negotiations with agencies outside the sector's system determine the opportunities for training policy development. Highly relevant are, of course, negotiations with national government. Especially, on matters like the financing of continuing training, specifically the level and terms of cofinancing by the government, access to training, specifically the access of special target groups like lower qualified workers, workers at risk, unemployed workers, etc., and the certification of training, specifically the formal recognition of sector specific programmes, things have to be settled with the national authorities. Secondly, regional or local authorities may become involved. Negotiations may concern e.g. the way in which regional educational provisions or regional development programmes and sectoral initiatives can be adjusted to each other. Particularly in larger countries, where regions have a strong political autonomy, the regional dimension can play an important role in negotiation processes.

The study of Blanpain et al (1994) on contractual policies concerning continuing training revealed that in some European countries training agreements especially between the social partners, usually laid down in collective labour contracts, play an important role in the development of sectoral training systems. In other countries training agreements between the government and the social partners in certain sectors provide important stimuli. The national reports on which this synthesis report is based confirm these conclusions.

Like the articulation process, also the negotiation process may fail to succeed. In that case, no agreements will be made and agents will continue to follow their own course separately. But, presumably, the failure will not remain without repercussions. One can easily imagine that it will press sectoral agencies to reconstruct parts of their original consultative infrastructure. Then, the cycle may start again.

*Creation*

The establishment of agreements on training between sectoral agencies can have a forceful impact on the sectoral system. Based on these agreements, activities can be set up aimed at the development of specific sectoral training policies, institutions and provisions. The following activities can be distinguished:

- elaboration of a common vision on training policy for the sector and the definition of a set of common intentions and goals;
- organization of tasks, responsibilities and jurisdictions with respect to training, by the establishment of specific sectoral training institutes;
- establishment of adequate working relationships between these training agencies and relevant other agencies within the sector (e.g. social partners) and outside of it (e.g. local authorities);
- building a system of information on training, training needs, developments in the sector, required qualifications, etc., including provisions for research and updating of information;
- development of a supply of training courses and programmes, to be offered to the sector;
- elaboration of procedures for the planning of training, including procedures for consultation, provision of information, research and observation of trends;
- elaboration of a set of rules and regulations for the allocation and attribution of training facilities, including financial facilities;
- establishment of a system of certification of training;
- elaboration of procedures for the evaluation of training and for quality assurance.

This model, of course, is an ideal typical model of a well developed training policy system. In practice, the situation in most sectors will not correspond fully to it. Certain activities may not have been carried out, others may have been given a low priority. The process of policy creation may have been spread out over many years and sectors may have followed very different roads to arrive at coherent policies. In fact, each of the described activities can be the starting point for the process. Sectors can make very different choices on this point. They can start e.g. with a joint statement of goals, with an adaption of an already existing training supply, with the establishment of a qualification observatory, with a sectoral trend survey, etc. Different starting points will lead to a different follow-up.

We may presume that obstacles encountered in the course of the process of training policy development will lead to new consultations between the responsible agents. These, in their turn, may lead to a revision of the original training agreements.

*Implementation*

The shaping of sectoral training policies and provisions is an important step in the development process. But the following step is perhaps even more important: the putting into practice of the sectoral policies on the level of the individual firms. In the end, all efforts have to result in effective training activities in the firms which constitute the sector and in adequately trained employees who can deal with new developments. The process of transmission from sectoral to firm level can be called the *implementation* of sectoral training activities. If this implementation fails to succeed it may lead among other things to sectoral training provisions staying unused, suboptimal allocation of training resources among companies and inequality with respect to chances of participation in training among employees. In the long term it can lead to a suboptimal diffusion and adoption of innovations and serious inefficiencies in the adaptation of companies toward new developments in technology and organization.

Recognizing its importance, agents in the field may develop special policies, strategies and instruments to stimulate an adequate implementation on firm level. One can think for instance of:

- measures aimed at activating companies, like special information and PR campaigns, appointment of regional consultants, special assistance/ consultants for drawing up in-company training plans;

- measures aimed at bringing training provisions geographically closer to companies, e.g. through regional instead of national institutes, cooperation of sectoral institutes with regional bodies;

- measures aimed at furthering implementation on company level through activities of work councils or trade union representatives;

- financial measures, e.g. special procedures/criteria for distribution of collective training resources, subvention of specific training projects or target group activities, bonuses for certain types of training;

- measures aimed at adjusting the training supply closer to the demands of the companies, like periodic training needs assessment, modularization of training programmes, developing in-company training courses;

- measures aimed at a better connection of off-the-job training with training and learning activities on the job, within the firms;

- measures aimed at connecting sectoral training policies closer to (technological) innovation cycles and R&D policies;

- measures aimed at developing (sub-/intra-/inter-)sectoral 'training networks' between groups of companies, employers or employees.

According to the national reports, especially those of Belgium, France and The Netherlands, apparently three groups of measures seem of special importance: activation of companies, flexibilization of the training supply and regionalization of the training provisions. In these countries several sectors have developed explicit instruments in these fields. It becomes clear in these sectors that the transmission from sectoral to firm level, especially to small and medium sized companies, is a difficult operation, because also on firm level there are many bottlenecks to training. However, the reports also demonstrate that up until now only very limited information has been available on what types of implementation measures have actually been used in different sectors and what results they have had in practice. Therefore, it is also difficult to assess what the most practicable strategies are to cope with the bottlenecks and under what circumstances these can work out with optimal effects.

One can easily imagine that if implementation is not successful and there are serious indications that participation in training lags behind, expenditure on training falls, training courses are seriously criticized or training programmes lose touch with new developments in the sector, that responsible agents then will start a process of reflection about on-going practices. In due course, this can lead to adaptions in the original policies and provisions.

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### 8.4 Relations between sectoral training systems and their environment

As has been indicated in the upper and lower parts of the model, sectoral training systems do not evolve in a vacuum, but develop in a particular environment. Characteristics of this environment determine the ground upon which sectoral systems can spring from. With the environment, open relationships do exist. Impulses from the environment enter the system and may bring about processes of change. But also, the other way round, certain activities within the system may result in impulses which bring about changes in parts of the environment.

Impulses on sectoral training systems can come from many directions. What exactly constitutes a system's environment can not be said beforehand, but has to be assessed by empirical research. Also, it is difficult to say beforehand which parts or factors in the environment are most influential. However, it is likely that some factors deserve special attention:

- new developments in the economy, in technology and in the external and internal organization of the sector; these will affect the employment structure in the sector and the content of jobs and occupations; this, then, will influence the structure and content of qualifications required and the needs for training;
- new developments in industrial relations; these will influence in particular the status and relationships of the social partners and their opportunities for policy development with respect to continuous training;
- new developments in the system for initial education, in particular initial vocational education; indirectly, these may also affect the provisions for continuing training (institutes, plans, programmes);
- new developments in government legislation, especially with respect to education and employment; these may affect the playing field, on which sectoral agencies undertake their activities.

It is important to stress that the sectoral training system has a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the environment. Impulses from outside, entering the system, will always be moulded within existing traditions, existing institutions and existing frames of reference. They will be incorporated, and partly neutralized, in the system's usual way of operating. This gives the system a certain stability, besides the flexibility it needs to be able to adapt itself to changes in the environment.

### 8.5 Sectoral training systems and the Social Dialogue

When we look at sectoral training systems, where does the Social Dialogue come in?

The Social Dialogue can be conceived of as the institutionalized mutual consultation of the social partners: the employers' and employees' organizations. Relevant for this study are in particular the forums for mutual consultation on matters of training. Earlier research (Blanpain et al, 1994; Heidemann et al, 1994) has revealed that such forums primarily are located on two levels: the level of branches and the level of companies.

The first level is the level of *branches or subsectors*, e.g. the branch of road transport as a part of the transport sector or the branch of hospitals as part of the health and care sector. It is especially on the level of the branch that the social partners can exert their influence. On this level joint bodies of the social partners may be established which occupy themselves with continuing training. As such they may administer their own training institutes and/or training funds or they may play an important role in the administration of autonomous training agencies working for the branch. Usually, their role will be legitimitized by a collective labour agreement. Through this authority the social partners will have a say in questions like the financing of training, access to training, training rights for employees, attribution of training facilities, definition of special target groups for training, etc. Together they define the regulatory framework for training policies to be developed in the branch.

The second level is the level of the *companies*. The social partners on this level are, on the one hand, the companies' management and, on the other hand, the workers' representatives (works councils and/or trade union cells). Depending on their legal rights, workers' representatives may have more or less opportunity to influence decisions of management with regard to training. The social dialogue on company level is relevant for sectoral training policies, in so far as it can be a vehicle for the transmission of sectoral initiatives to (individual) employers and employees. Workers representatives can for example control whether sectoral agreements are observed in their company, whether sectoral training courses are adequately used, whether sectoral facilities reach the right groups of employees etc.

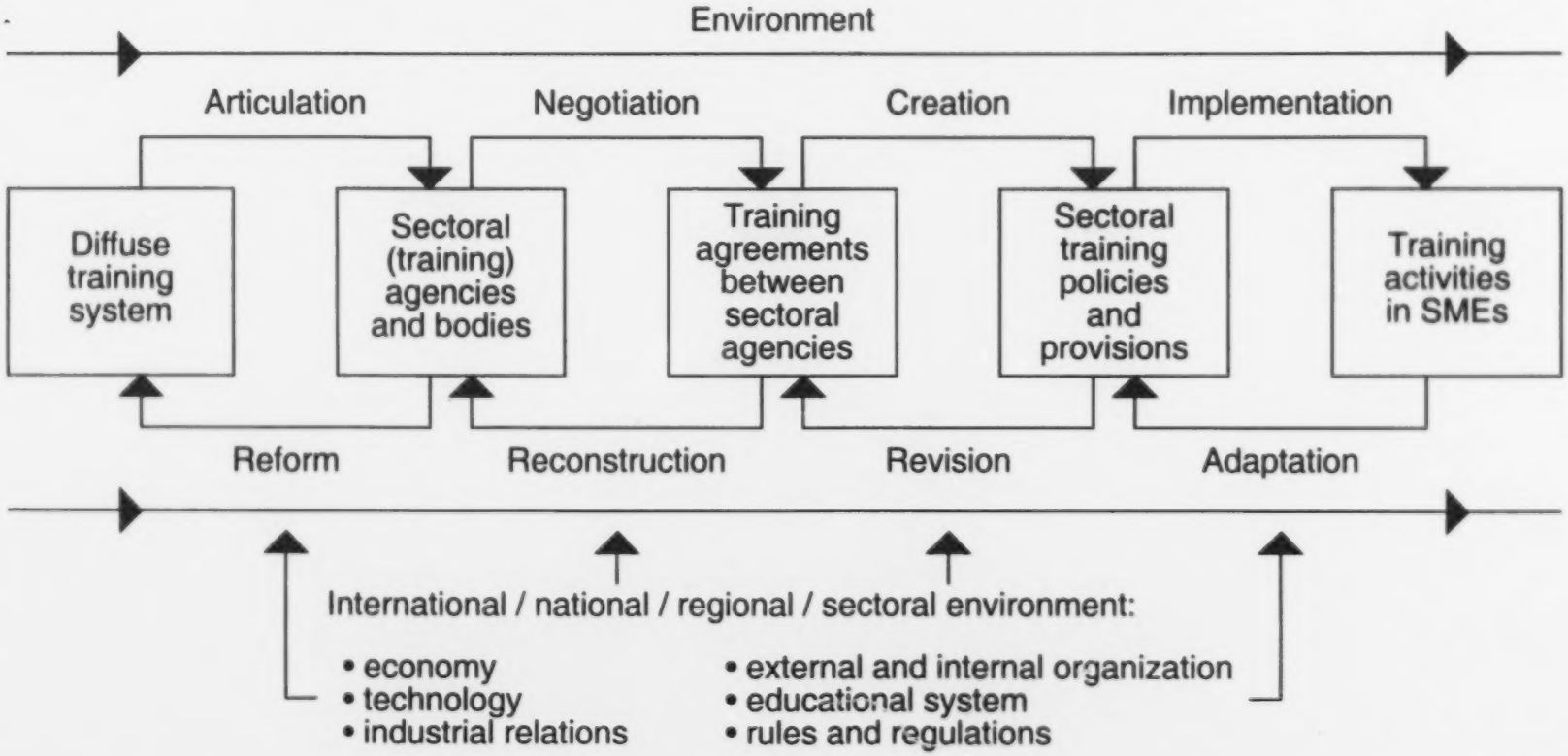
So, the Social Dialogue on these two levels, as far as it concerns continuing training, is directly located within the sectoral training system. Above that, there is another type of involvement of the social partners which is situated in the environment, but which may exert strong influence on the activities within the system itself. This concerns their involvement in *initial vocational education* on national, regional, sectoral and - in some instances - company level. In many countries the involvement of the social partners in the national systems for vocational education is growing. In some larger countries, where due to political decentralisation autonomous regions have gained influence in vocational education, the social partners - often through sectoral agencies - have increasingly become involved in regional policy making. Especially in countries/sectors where the systems of initial vocational education and continuing vocational training are closely intertwined this involvement deserves special attention.

### 8.6 Segments of sectoral training systems

Now, summarising the arguments, we may say that a sectoral training system is the whole system of qualification facilities for functions in a particular domain of economic activity. In a highly developed state, this system consists of three main segments: initial daytime education, dual vocational training and private institutes for vocational qualification. Initial daytime education is a public matter; it is financed by the national government from the national budget. Dual vocational training is provided by the training institutes within the apprenticeship system. This way of training is partly financed by the government and partly by trade and industry. Training activities in the form of courses are almost entirely a matter of private initiative. Mostly, they are completely financed by contributions from companies or from the participants themselves. However, in the last few years the dividing line between the public and the private segment has become blurred, in particular in countries where these segments traditionally are strongly separated. Schools for public vocational education are allowed to develop commercial activities on a contractual basis, for instance for private companies. Private training institutes make overtures of closer co-operation in some fields to the apprentice system and schools for public education. All these training provisions - public, private and public-private - constitute elements in a sectoral training system and can be regarded as links in a chain of facilities aimed at effecting an adequate connection between demand and supply of labour (Hövels and Römkens, 1994).

**Errata – "Sectoral approach to training. Synthesis report on trends and issues in five European countries."**

**Page 106a: Figure 1 - Model for analysing sectoral training systems**

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